



NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**CAN THE 2014 COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT ON
THE BANGSAMORO (CAB) SUCCEED IN MINDANAO
WHERE PREVIOUS AGREEMENTS FAILED?**

by

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March 2015

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE March 2015		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE CAN THE 2014 COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT ON THE BANGSAMORO (CAB) SUCCEED IN MINDANAO WHERE PREVIOUS AGREEMENTS FAILED?			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Romelo L. Delos Santos				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB Protocol number ____N/A____.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) This thesis examines the major peace agreements between the Government of the Philippines (GOP) and the Moros. The study addresses whether the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) is likely to resolve the long-standing conflict between the GOP and the Moro separatist movements that date back to the 1960s. This study identifies why previous peace agreements between the GOP and rebel forces failed to achieve sustainable peace, and analyzes the extent to which the CAB addresses these failures. Specifically, this study compares the CAB to the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, the 1996 Final Peace Agreement, and the 2008 Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain. Though the CAB is still in the beginning stages of implementation, the effort by both groups toward making the agreement work suggests the likelihood of sustainable peace.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, Final Peace Agreement, Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain, Mindanao, Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Moro National Liberation Front, Tripoli Agreement			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 85	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

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FAILED?**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(FAR EAST, SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the major peace agreements between the Government of the Philippines (GOP) and the Moros. The study addresses whether the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) is likely to resolve the long-standing conflict between the GOP and the Moro separatist movements that date back to the 1960s. This study identifies why previous peace agreements between the GOP and rebel forces failed to achieve sustainable peace, and analyzes the extent to which the CAB addresses these failures. Specifically, this study compares the CAB to the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, the 1996 Final Peace Agreement, and the 2008 Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain. Though the CAB is still in the beginning stages of implementation, the effort by both groups toward making the agreement work suggests the likelihood of sustainable peace.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION.....	1
B.	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION.....	2
C.	LITERATURE REVIEW	3
1.	Reasons Autonomy May Resolve Conflict.....	4
2.	Reasons Autonomy May Not Resolve Conflict.....	6
3.	Ethnonational Character of the Moro Separatist Movements	8
4.	Moro Demands for Autonomy	9
5.	Latest Effort to Negotiate Resolution.....	9
D.	POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES	10
E.	RESEARCH DESIGN	12
F.	THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE.....	13
II.	1976 TRIPOLI AGREEMENT	15
A.	NEGOTIATION OF PEACE AGREEMENT	18
B.	IMPLEMENTATION	20
C.	CONCLUSION	22
III.	1996 FINAL PEACE AGREEMENT	25
A.	NEGOTIATION OF PEACE AGREEMENT	27
B.	IMPLEMENTATION	30
C.	CONCLUSION	32
IV.	2008 MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT ON ANCESTRAL DOMAIN	37
A.	NEGOTIATION OF PEACE AGREEMENT	39
B.	IMPLEMENTATION	42
C.	CONCLUSION	43
V.	2014 COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT ON THE BANGSAMORO	47
A.	NEGOTIATION OF PEACE AGREEMENT	49
B.	IMPLEMENTATION	52
C.	THE CAB WILL NOT RESOLVE CONFLICT IN MINDANAO.....	53
D.	THE CAB WILL RESOLVE CONFLICT IN MINDANAO	55
E.	CONCLUSION	57
VI.	CONCLUSION	59
A.	1976 TRIPOLI AGREEMENT	59
B.	1996 FINAL PEACE AGREEMENT	60
C.	2008 MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT ON ANCESTRAL DOMAIN	60
D.	2014 COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT ON THE BANGSAMORO ..	60
E.	LIKELIHOOD OF THE CAB RESOLVING CONFLICT	62
	LIST OF REFERENCES	63
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	71

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
BBL	Bangsamoro Basic Law
BIFF	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
BIFM	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement
BJE	Bangsamoro Juridical Entity
BMA	Bangsa Moro Army
CAB	Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro
CENS	Center of Excellence for National Security
FAB	Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro
GOP	Government of the Philippines
GRP	Government of the Republic of the Philippines
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICP	Independent Commission on Policing
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MNLF-MG	Moro National Liberation Front – Misuari Group
MOA-AD	Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation

PNP	Philippine National Police
RA	Republic Act
RSIS	Rajaratnam School of International Studies
SPCPD	Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development
SRSF	Special Regional Security Forces
SZOPAD	Special Zone of Peace and Development
TAM	Transitional Arrangements and Modalities
UN	United Nations
UNYPAD-RANAO	United Youth for Peace and Development – Relief Assistance Network and Organization

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply indebted to the following individuals for their support during this journey.

I would like to acknowledge the professors and staff of the Naval Postgraduate School who I had the privilege of knowing. Thank you to the professors from whom I had the honor of learning for sharing their knowledge for my personal development. Thank you to the staff I had the pleasure of working with for creating a comfortable academic environment and helping students like myself so that we could concentrate on our studies.

I would like to thank my thesis advisors, Professors Michael Malley and Tristan Mabry, for their time, support, guidance, and invaluable input. Please know that what you taught me inside and outside of the classroom has made me a better person and professional.

Most of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my family. The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the support and love of my wife, Jolla Marie, and our daughters, Pippy and Riley.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis will examine the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) signed on March 27, 2014, by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Government of the Philippines (GOP) against three other major peace agreements between the GOP and the Moros.¹ This conflict between the Moros and the GOP emerged in response to a decades-long process of “territorial and demographic minoritization,”² and has evolved through numerous failed negotiations into a quest by the Moros “for the right to self-determination and a form of governance that gives them dignity and power.”³

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis will address if the CAB is likely to resolve the long-running conflict between the GOP and the Moro separatist movement that has thrived in Mindanao since the late 1960s. To answer this question, this thesis will identify the reasons that previous peace agreements between the government and rebel forces failed to resolve this conflict and assess the extent to which the new agreement addresses these reasons for their failure. More specifically, this thesis will compare the CAB to the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, the 1996 Final Peace Agreement, and the 2008 Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD).

¹ The Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, Republic of the Philippines, last modified March 27, 2014, <http://www.gov.ph/2014/03/27/document-cab/>.

² Astrid S. Tuminez, “Neither Sovereignty nor Autonomy: Continuing Conflict in the Southern Philippines,” in *Proceedings of the 102nd Annual Meeting (American Society of International Law)* Vol. 102, (Washington, DC: American Society of International Law, 2008), 122, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25660279>.

³ *Ibid.*, 123.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Since the 1960s, the Moros have engaged in a series of military campaigns to achieve their goals. As a result of these conflicts, more than 100,000 people have died, and, at various times, millions more have been displaced from their homes.⁴ On four occasions, the GOP has negotiated peace agreements with Moro separatist organizations. However, the first three failed to bring peace to Mindanao. As a result, the government has continued to face an armed opposition movement that counts more than 10,000 fighters and controls large amounts of territory.⁵ Over the past 15 years, Philippine and international terrorist groups have taken advantage of this conflict to obtain safe havens, train, and launch attacks. Moreover, the magnitude and persistence of violence in the Southern Philippines has led the Philippine military to devote the bulk of its resources to internal security, and encouraged the GOP to invest in a force structure that is poorly prepared to meet external threats, such as the ones they face in the South China Sea. Thus, the success or failure of the recent peace agreement is important not just for the livelihood of the Moros, but also for the GOP's ability to refocus its resources on pressing external security challenges.

For the purpose of producing a consistent naming convention within this thesis, "separatist groups" will be referred to as the "Moros," unless the text is specifically referring to a certain separatist group. All separatist groups in this study originate from Mindanao. When something applies to all separatist groups, rather than listing each individual group, they will be collectively referred to as the name that the people of Mindanao were given in order to prevent confusion. The area of research in the Southern Philippines will be referred to as "Mindanao," unless the research is specifically referring to an island in the Sulu archipelago. Mindanao is one of the three major archipelagos that make up the Philippines. To prevent confusion, the area of research will be referred to as the name of the island group that it belongs to, rather than referring to each individual province on Mindanao.

⁴ Tuminez, *Neither Sovereignty nor Autonomy*, 122.

⁵ BBC News Asia, "Guide to the Philippines Conflict," BBC News, October 8, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-17038024>.

Determining whether or not the CAB will succeed where previous agreements failed offers a significant point in the realm of group conflict. This thesis will assess whether the conditions granted in the CAB will likely resolve the Moro and the GOP conflict that dates back to the 1960s.⁶ If the CAB can deliver conditions that satisfy all parties involved, then Mindanao may finally find closure to an armed conflict that has been responsible for population displacement of over a million Moros and the deaths of over 100,000 Moros.⁷

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

“Postcolonial states in...Southeast Asia continue to be challenged by violent ethnonationalist and secessionist insurgencies,” states Rajat Ganguly in an introduction on resolving ethnonational conflict through autonomy.⁸ These insurgencies looked for the creation of “artificial and arbitrary state boundaries” with “the real ethnic divisions on the ground.”⁹ Historically, state governments would ignore these calls for reorganization in an effort to maintain state stability.¹⁰ States feared that territorial reorganization of any type would display institutional weakness and bring the return of their former colonizers.¹¹ The state’s opposition to these demands brought forth the creation of “ethnonationalist and secessionist movements.”¹²

On managing such conflicts, Stefan Wolff provides subject matter expert Ted Gurr’s thoughts on autonomy; Wolff states that “autonomy arrangements can be an

⁶ Tuminez, “Neither Sovereignty nor Autonomy,” 122.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Rajat Ganguly, “Is Autonomy a Solution or an Obstacle to Resolving Ethno-National Conflicts,” in *Autonomy and Ethnic Conflict in South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Rajat Ganguly (London; New York: Routledge, 2012), 1.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Michelle Ann Miller, “The Problem of Armed Separatism: Is Autonomy the Answer?” in *Autonomy and Armed Separatism in South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Michelle Ann Miller (Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asia, 2012), 3.

¹² Ganguly, “Is Autonomy a Solution,” 1.

effective means for managing regional conflict.”¹³ Based on this understanding, the CAB could resolve the conflict in Mindanao depending on autonomous conditions granted within the peace agreement. Michelle Ann Miller defines autonomy as “a core set of characteristics” with “two features that all autonomy arrangements have in common.”¹⁴ The first feature names specific boundaries within the state and without harm to the state’s territorial integrity. The second feature deals with the devolution of authority. This downward distribution can cover a negotiated arrangement of power dealing with “legislative, political, administrative, economic, cultural, and religious affairs from the central government to the minority peoples or region that comprise the autonomous entity.”¹⁵

On autonomy, Marc Weller adds that the autonomy granted should “be tailored specifically to the particular circumstances of the situation in question.”¹⁶ For this thesis, these circumstances will be derived from demands of the Mindanao conflict between the Moros and the GOP. These “particular circumstances” will be key when predicting the CAB’s ability to resolve conflict in Mindanao.¹⁷ This thesis asks whether the autonomy granted, as defined by Miller and Weller, is likely to resolve the longstanding conflict.

1. Reasons Autonomy May Resolve Conflict

Autonomy has been credited as one of many different approaches in resolving ethnonational conflict. On autonomy, David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild assert that “political decentralization along territorial lines” has begun to play an increasing role in the structuring of “contemporary civil war settlements.”¹⁸ Solutions that encompass this

¹³ Stefan Wolff, “Managing Ethnic Conflict: The Merits and Perils of Territorial Accommodation,” *Political Studies Review* 9, no. 1 (January 2011): 27, doi:10.1111/j.1478-9302.2010.00224.x.

¹⁴ Miller, “Problem of Armed Separatism,” 6.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Marc Weller, *Asymmetric Autonomy and the Settlement of Ethnic Conflicts*, ed. Marc Weller and Katherine Nobbs (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 1.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Philip G. Roeder and Donald Rothchild, *Sustainable Peace: Power and Democracy after Civil Wars*, ed. Philip G. Roeder and Donald Rothchild (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 109.

autonomous theme have been utilized in GOP attempts to end civil war in Mindanao.¹⁹ This is often the chosen route because it recognizes “the political and spatial realities on the ground” and “the division of territory won...at the negotiating table.”²⁰ Along the same lines, Dawn Brancati adds that there is a belief that “political decentralization” may decrease “ethnic conflict and secessionism in the world today.”²¹

By creating autonomous conditions that suit all parties, we may expect that decentralization provides the Moros with “greater autonomy over cultural, economic, and social policies,” and the GOP with the satisfaction of “territorial integrity.”²² If decentralization is ignored and the agreement gravitates towards “political centralization,” Lake and Rothchild provide that finding stability in conflict becomes more difficult.²³ Brancati strengthens Lake and Rothchild’s claim with “statistical analysis” that states “decentralized systems of government are less likely to experience...conflict and...rebellion than centralized systems of government.”²⁴ If the CAB can create decentralization that can “reduce...conflict and secessionism,” we can expect the empowerment of “ethnic groups clustered in regions to pass legislation protecting their various interests and concerns” in Mindanao.²⁵ If the peace settlement can establish such guidelines, then we can expect that the CAB may resolve conflict in Mindanao.

Furthermore, Jacques Bertrand says that there is a scholarly consensus “that autonomy...can reduce ethnic conflict, alleviate nationalist demands, and prevent secession.”²⁶ In doing so, autonomous conditions provide “the means to obtain cultural

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Dawn Brancati, “Decentralization: Fueling the Fire or Dampening the Flames of Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism,” *International Organization* 60, no. 3 (July 2006): 651, doi:10.1017/S002081830606019X.

²² Roeder and Rothchild, *Sustainable Peace*, 120.

²³ Ibid., 132.

²⁴ Brancati, “Decentralization,” 681.

²⁵ Ibid., 655–6.

²⁶ Jacques Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

recognition, certain guarantees, laws, or advantages for itself.”²⁷ In closing, if the CAB satisfies the demands of all parties, autonomous conditions that distribute powers can facilitate the Moros’ management of policies at the regional level.²⁸ An agreement that grants such autonomy will potentially resolve the long-running conflict in Mindanao.

2. Reasons Autonomy May Not Resolve Conflict

While some see autonomy as a key factor in reaching resolution, others believe that it exacerbates the problem. Brancati states that some scholars believe that it worsens the conflict “by reinforcing regionally based ethnic identities” and provides “groups at the regional level of government with the resources to engage in ethnic conflict and secessionism.”²⁹ Based on this understanding, autonomy strongly reinforces separatist beliefs. By awarding autonomy to the minority group, the government consequently provides the necessary tools and resources needed to challenge the state for their sovereignty.³⁰ One opinion states that autonomy could potentially increase conflict.³¹ With more power than the minority group started with in its quest for autonomy, it is easy to understand how success in their struggle and this newly awarded autonomy can regenerate separatist feelings.

Another perspective explains that just because autonomy mandates “new institutional arrangements,” does not mean “quality of governance would automatically improve.”³² Numerous case studies show that a decrease in quality is what typically occurs.³³ As a result, once these new arrangements have been implemented, it takes time before the new system can take effect. Some believe that autonomy fails due to continuity of poor governing from one administration to the next.³⁴ Such failure is typically coupled

²⁷ Ibid., 186.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Brancati, “Decentralization,” 652.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ganguly, “Is Autonomy a Solution,” 4.

³² Ibid., 5.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 4.

with the outgoing and incoming government's inability to properly implement conditions of the agreement.³⁵

Last, some believe that autonomy will fail if the associated conditions are exclusive. The Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) news agency of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs quotes a past "United Nation (UN) report evaluating progress in building lasting peace in countries emerging from conflict since 2010," stating that exclusion of groups would act as a catalyst to the re-ignition of violence in the region.³⁶ The same report reveals that a majority of all-inclusive agreements have achieved conflict resolution.³⁷

This study believes that inclusivity and full implementation of the agreement are the key factors to achieving sustainable peace in Mindanao. Marc Weller states that for autonomy to succeed, agreements should "be tailored specifically to the particular circumstances of the situation in question."³⁸ In this case, all groups negotiating must be satisfied with the conditions designed. Weller adds that conditions must also be created in a way where "central authorities will not...change the overall constitutional makeup of the state in order to accommodate separatist pressure."³⁹ If satisfaction can be achieved with a well-designed agreement, full implementation of such an agreement may likely resolve conflict. Additionally, Clare Castillejo states that there is proof of inclusivity's role in ending conflict.⁴⁰ She adds that this proof supports that "the inclusion of excluded groups in post-conflict political settlements is important to ensure a sustainable exit from

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ "Prospects For Peace In Mindanao," *Integrated Regional Information Networks: Humanitarian News and Analysis*, March 19, 2014, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/99806/prospects-for-peace-in-mindanao>.

³⁷ Integrated Regional Information Networks, *Prospects For Peace*.

³⁸ Marc Weller, *Asymmetric Autonomy and the Settlement of Ethnic Conflicts*, ed. Marc Weller and Katherine Nobbs (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 1.

³⁹ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁰ Clare Castillejo, "Promoting Inclusion in Political Settlements: A Priority for International Actors," Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, March 2014, http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/e064fd8c68d1be1dd3af802be5a97dd8.pdf.

conflict.”⁴¹ Agreements that apply both points into its final design have a better chance of achieving sustainable peace.

3. Ethnonational Character of the Moro Separatist Movements

The Moros, as labeled by the Spanish (due to a resemblance with their Moroccan and Mauritanian adversaries), were not strangers to ethnic conflict.⁴² The Moros were once involved in a deep conflict that stretched back to the Spanish colonial era.⁴³ The conflict was a struggle involving Spanish invaders encroaching on their homeland, attempting to cleanse the Moros of their Muslim identity, and forcing integration into the Christian faith.⁴⁴ Today, the Moros account for five percent of the Philippine’s population of 107 million, and the majority of the Moros reside in Mindanao.⁴⁵ The Moros’ claim to the Southern Philippines traces back centuries before the Spanish arrival in 1565.⁴⁶

Appropriately, the Moros have evolved into a ethnic nation during the course of this longstanding ethnonational conflict. Ganguly defines ethnic nation as a population that resides within a “defined territorial homeland” and shares a common cultural heritage, language, history, and sometimes religion, with the will “to exist as an independent and sovereign nation-state.”⁴⁷ Therefore, ethnonational conflict, as defined by Wolff, provides that at least one group involved in conflict perceives that

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Benedicto R. Bacani, “The Mindanao Peace Talks,” United States Institute Of Peace, July 23, 2014, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr131.pdf>.

⁴³ G. Eugene Martin and Astrid S. Tuminez, “Toward Peace in the Philippines,” United States Institute Of Peace, July 23, 2014, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr202.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁵ The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, last modified June 20, 2014, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rp.html>; Bacani, *Mindanao Peace Talks*, 3.

⁴⁶ Bacani, *Mindanao Peace Talks*, 3.

⁴⁷ Ganguly, *Is Autonomy a Solution*, 2.

discrimination is occurring due to ethnonational differences.⁴⁸ This defines the Moros' stand against the GOP in their quest for autonomy.

4. Moro Demands for Autonomy

Similar to the Moros of the colonial period, the Moros in contemporary times have been heavily involved in armed conflict against the GOP. The Muslims, who were subjugated to Spanish colonization, also endured “poor governance and lack of justice” from the GOP for over forty years.⁴⁹ The Moros, who were left out of development, answered rebelliously with action by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the late 1960s.⁵⁰ This was the beginning of armed conflict with the MNLF, and eventually the MILF—a breakaway group from the MNLF—and other splinter groups that heavily contributed to the deaths of over 100,000 people.⁵¹ Since the MNLF's inception, there have been numerous failed attempts at resolution between the MNLF, MILF, and GOP. As a result, there has been a gradual downgrade of the Moros “from Philippine society, politics, and economic development.”⁵² Consequently, Mindanao has suffered from the steady decline in autonomy. This thesis focuses on the 1976 Tripoli Agreement with the MNLF, the 1996 Final Peace Agreement with the MNLF, and the 2008 Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain with the MILF to understand the various negotiated demands and reasons for failure.

5. Latest Effort to Negotiate Resolution

On March 27, 2014, the conflict arrived at an agreement after more than forty years of fighting with the signing of the CAB between the MILF and the GOP.⁵³ After years of failed attempts, the GOP and the MILF stated that this agreement adequately

⁴⁸ Stefan Wolff, “Managing Ethno-National Conflict: Towards an Analytical Framework, StephanWolff.com, accessed September 7, 2014, [http://www.stefanwolff.com/files/Managing%20Ethno-national%20Conflict%20\(draft\).pdf](http://www.stefanwolff.com/files/Managing%20Ethno-national%20Conflict%20(draft).pdf).

⁴⁹ Martin and Tuminez, *Toward Peace*, 1.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Tuminez, *Neither Sovereignty Nor Autonomy*, 122.

⁵² Martin and Tuminez, *Toward Peace*, 1.

⁵³ Republic of the Philippines, *The Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro*.

addresses Moro demands and reasons of past failure. On June 26, 2014 the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the Third Istanbul Conference on Mediation, to discuss details of the peace process in Southern Mindanao.⁵⁴ Selcuk Colakoglu of *The Journal of Turkish Weekly* provides that panelists consisting of scholars and government officials stated that the process of achieving peace in Southern Mindanao was a success.⁵⁵ Colakoglu adds that “political, security-related, and socio-economic measures are being formulated” and that “authorities believe...all practical deficiencies will be remedied.”⁵⁶ As a result, Colakoglu affirms that the success achieved by the level of autonomy granted provides the global community with a “success story” that can be used to motivate other states “to overcome similar conflicts through dialogue and negotiation.”⁵⁷

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

This thesis will discuss two hypotheses. The first hypothesis is if there is an exclusion of certain groups from the planning process, the latest peace agreement is unlikely to resolve the conflict in Mindanao. The second hypothesis is that without full implementation of the agreed-upon conditions by all groups involved, it is unlikely that the latest peace agreement will resolve conflict in Mindanao.

The newly signed CAB appears promising; however, observers like the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) news agency, Paula Defensor Knack, Edsel Tupaz, and Daniel Wagner claim that the agreement will not serve as a peaceful solution to the conflict. These observers have stated that exclusion of groups from the agreement will prolong the conflict. The IRIN news agency of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs provides that the recently signed agreement with the MILF fails to include separatist groups such as the MNLF, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), and “the Al Qaeda linked Abu Sayyaf and Khalifa Islmiyah

⁵⁴ Selcuk Colakoglu, “Can the Mindanao Peace Process End with a Success Story?,” *Journal of Turkish Weekly*, July 2, 2014, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/print.asp?type=4&id=3892>.

⁵⁵ Colakoglu, *Can the Mindanao Peace Process End*.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Mindanao.”⁵⁸ The news agency also states that, to external observers, participation of Mindanao’s indigenous peoples, the Lumads, in the negotiations is vague.⁵⁹ Thoughts of Paula Defensor Knack are in line with IRIN’s claim. Knack also believes that exclusion of the “MNLF, private armies...paramilitary civilian groups... militias... the heirs of the Sultanate of Sulu...and the indigenous tribes” is an issue with the newly signed agreement.⁶⁰ Edsel Tupaz and Daniel Wagner of *International Policy Digest* have labeled the exclusiveness of the CAB as “the primary issue.”⁶¹ Based on the statements made by IRIN, Knack, Tupaz, and Wagner, sustainable peace is not expected and exclusion of these other groups may hinder the GOP and MILF from achieving sustainable peace.

Others believe that failure to implement conditions of the agreement will hurt the chances for peace. Historically, peace agreements often fail during implementation of the deal.⁶² The difficulty is not in reaching an agreement, but rather executing what was agreed upon.⁶³ Even if conditions agreed upon satisfy all parties, there is still potential for failure in achieving sustainable peace during the implementation phase. Associate Research Fellow, Joseph Franco from the Center of Excellence for National Security (CENS) of the Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, argues that “small arms proliferation and a weak rule of law” will hurt the chances of resolving conflict in Mindanao.⁶⁴ Franco pessimistically claims that execution of the MILF disarmament will be extremely

⁵⁸ Integrated Regional Information Networks, *Prospects For Peace*.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Paula Defensor Knack, “Bangsamoro Peace Deal For Mindanao: Where’s the Peace?,” *The Diplomat*, April 9, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/04/bangsamoro-peace-deal-for-mindanao-wheres-the-peace/>.

⁶¹ Edsel Tupaz and Daniel Wagner, “Can the Peace Dividend Last in the Philippines?,” *International Policy Digest*, March 31, 2014, <http://www.internationalpolicydigest.org/2014/03/31/can-peace-dividend-last-philippines/>.

⁶² Stefan Wolff, *Ethnic Conflict: A Global Perspective* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁶³ Ibid., 7.

⁶⁴ Joseph Franco, “Violence and Peace Spoilers in the Southern Philippines,” Middle East Institute, July 15, 2014, <http://www.mei.edu/content/map/violence-and-peace-spoilers-southern-philippines>.

difficult in a region where there is “an entrenched gun culture.”⁶⁵ He states that in a region where there are over “100,000 guns ... and where weapons are passed on as family heirlooms” achieving disarmament could be difficult.⁶⁶ Knack of *The Diplomat* would concur with Franco in terms of the difficulty to achieve complete disarmament; however, she believes that “total disarmament” is an issue because “four commanders of the MILF, with about 4,000 followers have refused to accept that requirement and returned to the MNLF fold, vowing to resume their secession bid.”⁶⁷ Without full disarmament, full implementation may not be possible.

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

A comparative study of past failed agreements with the MNLF and the MILF against the recently signed CAB with the MILF are conducted in order to assess the agreement’s ability to resolve the long-running conflict between the GOP and the Moros. This analysis provides the historical background of each failed agreement discussed, what was agreed upon, and assessments on each agreement’s reasons of failure. Information and assessments analyzed by this thesis combine scholarly research, think-tank assessments, and news-media articles. Information is analyzed to ask why the longstanding conflict has not been resolved. Assessments are conducted on the 1976 Tripoli Agreement with the MNLF, the 1996 Final Peace Agreement with the MNLF, and the 2008 Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain with the MILF. These case studies have been specifically selected, since failure of each agreement has played a significant role in extending the life of the Mindanao conflict.

Following the assessments of each failed agreement with the MNLF and MILF, this thesis examines the CAB. The analysis of this agreement provides the main points agreed upon between the GOP and the MILF. Further assessment discusses if the conditions granted in the CAB satisfyingly address the demands and reasons of past failures and its ability to resolve the long-running conflict in Mindanao. Since the

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Franco, *Violence and Peace Spoilers*.

⁶⁷ Knack, *Bangsamoro Peace Deal*.

agreement is considerably new, scholarly assessments are limited. This thesis references an assortment of secondary sources that predict if the conflict will be resolved.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis asks if the CAB can resolve the longstanding conflict. Full cooperation between the GOP and the MILF during implementation of the agreement may be required in order to fully resolve the conflict.

Chapter II discusses the 1976 Tripoli Agreement between the GOP and the MNLF. It conducts a historical background review of the agreement, reviews the negotiation process, discusses its implementation, and analyzes why the agreement failed.

Chapter III discusses the 1996 Final Peace Agreement between the GOP and the MNLF. It conducts a historical background review of the agreement, reviews the negotiation process, discusses its implementation, and analyzes why the agreement failed.

Chapter IV discusses the 2008 Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) between the GOP and the MILF. It conducts a historical background review of the agreement, reviews the negotiation process, discusses its implementation, and analyzes why the agreement failed.

Chapter V discusses the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) between the GOP and the MILF. It conducts a historical review of events leading to the signing of the agreement in March of 2014, reviews the negotiation process, discusses its implementation, and lists reasons why the agreement might fail or succeed.

This study concludes with a comparison of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement between the GOP and the MNLF, the 1996 Final Peace Agreement between the GOP and the MNLF, and the 2008 MOA-AD between the GOP and the MILF against the CAB. Additionally, this conclusion will take the most important points of failure from each previous agreement to ask whether each point of failure applies to the current situation and if it has been addressed in the CAB. Based on the results from the comparison conducted, this thesis attempts to predict whether the CAB will resolve the longstanding conflict in Mindanao.

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II. 1976 TRIPOLI AGREEMENT

After World War II, the region experienced government sponsored influxes of Christian settlers; policies that encouraged the movement of Christian Filipinos into the south continued to be heavily enforced during the dictatorship of President Ferdinand Marcos.⁶⁸ Christian elites, with support from the Philippine military formed organizations in the late 1960s that began taking ownership of lands belonging to the Moros.⁶⁹ The “land grabbing” left many Moro Muslims with nowhere to go.⁷⁰ In response, the Moro elites and landowners joined forces to fight against the Christian ‘invaders’.⁷¹

Policies that supported Christian movement into the south proved effective with population control in the north; however, they increased tensions in Mindanao that gave birth to southern separatist movements.⁷² Conflicts between the Muslims and Christians continued to increase longstanding and violent war between the separatist groups of Mindanao and the Government of the Philippines (GOP).⁷³ Fights progressed past land issues and extended into battles for the region’s top government positions.⁷⁴ Control of the government by either entity guaranteed protection of each group’s political and economic priorities. While the death toll increased, the Christians emerged victorious in government elections for some of the top positions in the region. Unresolved land issues and transitions in authority increased problems between the Moro Muslims and the GOP. President Marcos used this conflict as justification to support his declaration of Martial Law.⁷⁵ His decision to declare Martial Law was perceived as “another move...to deprive

⁶⁸ Ashgar Ali Engineer, “Struggle For A Separate Islamic State,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 19, no. 51/52 (1984), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4373905>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Engineer, *Struggle For A Separate Islamic State*, 2154.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Government of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, “ARMM History,” Official website of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, accessed February 1, 2015, <http://armm.gov.ph/history/>.

⁷³ Martin and Tuminez, *Toward Peace in the Philippines*, 2–3.

⁷⁴ Engineer, *Struggle For A Separate Islamic State*, 2154.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 2155.

Muslim traditional leadership of its power and influence.”⁷⁶ As a result, 1971 saw the birth of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).⁷⁷ Its founder, Nur Misuari, led the Moro Muslims in a fight for autonomy against the GOP. Members of the MNLF were very proud of their Moro heritage and aimed to restore equality for the Moros in Mindanao.⁷⁸ Their ideology and the arrival of martial law would result in a violent response towards the GOP.⁷⁹

Nur Misuari’s insurgency represented Mindanao in its quest for autonomy. The MNLF’s creation was the physical form of “Moro opposition” to “mass Christian migration to the south” and to economic practices that the Moros were subjected to once “the local Christian sector increasingly gained control of the local economic infrastructure.”⁸⁰ Most importantly, in this attempt to regain control of the land that was once Moro dominated, the MNLF led the fight to recapture “Muslim political power” from the Christian transplants.⁸¹ The government policy responsible for the relocation of Christians into Mindanao marginalized the Moro majority into an ethnic minority and left many of them homeless.⁸² The Moros, once rich in “mineral wealth” and blessed with an abundance of “natural resources,” now found themselves with extreme financial difficulties and living “in grinding poverty.”⁸³

The fight originally directed towards the migrating Christians eventually targeted the GOP; the GOP led by President Ferdinand Marcos had been accused of favoring the Christians during the conflict between the two groups.⁸⁴ President Marcos responded

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 2154.

⁷⁸ Moshe Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002).

⁷⁹ Yegar, *Between Integration*, 268.

⁸⁰ Ivan Molloy, “The Question of an Alliance Between Islam and Communism,” *Asian Survey* 25, no. 8 (1985), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2644112>.

⁸¹ Molloy, *The Question of an Alliance*, 824.

⁸² Ashgar Ali Engineer, “The Moro Struggle Seen in a Wider Perspective,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, no. 48 (1985), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4375053>.

⁸³ Engineer, *The Moro Struggle*, 2113.

⁸⁴ Molloy, *The Question of an Alliance*, 825.

with approaches that increased “economic exploitation and political repression” of the Moros.⁸⁵ It appeared to the Moros that the GOP was “trying to drive a wedge between the Christians and Muslims.”⁸⁶ The conflict influenced President Marcos’ decision to impose Martial Law on the Philippines in 1972 due to concerns of a “communist insurgency movement intent on capturing state power and a Muslim secessionist movement” in Mindanao.⁸⁷ As a result, the MNLF declared war against President Marcos and his administration.⁸⁸ The MNLF’s declaration included the activation of the Bangsa Moro Army (BMA), who would be responsible for fighting GOP forces and defending the Moro residents of Mindanao.⁸⁹ War and the inability to regain political control further justified their necessity to break away from the Philippines and “form an independent Islamic homeland, the Bangsa Moro Republic.”⁹⁰

Nur Misuari of the MNLF found some support in their struggle for independence from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).⁹¹ OIC backing came in the form of “moral and material support.”⁹² OIC member Libya reiterated its support for the MNLF during the MNLF leader’s visit to their country; from the announcement of Martial Law in 1972, the OIC continuously monitored Muslim struggle in Mindanao. Acting as an MNLF advocate, the OIC communicated the necessity of establishing peace with the MNLF.⁹³

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Engineer, *The Moro Struggle*, 2114.

⁸⁷ Cesar Adib Majul, “The Moro Struggle in the Philippines,” *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1988), <http://www.jstor.org/stable3992672>.

⁸⁸ Molloy, *The Question of an Alliance*, 825.

⁸⁹ Majul, *The Moro Struggle*, 906.

⁹⁰ Molloy, *The Question of an Alliance*, 825.

⁹¹ Majul, *The Moro Struggle*, 907.

⁹² Ronald J. May, “From Obstacles to Conflict Resolution in the Southern Philippines,” in *Autonomy and Armed Separatism in South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Michelle Ann Miller (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012), 280.

⁹³ Majul, *The Moro Struggle*, 907.

A. NEGOTIATION OF PEACE AGREEMENT

The negotiations that produced the 1976 Tripoli Agreement were mediated by the OIC and occurred in two stages. In the first round, both groups met in Saudi Arabia, but arrived at a stalemate. In the second round, both groups met in Libya and concluded the meeting with the creation of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement.

From 1972 to 1974, the GOP and Moro conflict was always a topic of discussion at the annual OIC conferences; after years of aggressive OIC pressure to remedy the conflict, the GOP recognized that they would need OIC support to achieve resolution with the Moros.⁹⁴ Finally, in 1975, the GOP sent representatives for a meeting with the MNLF in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The panels discussed MNLF demands of “a constitutional amendment guaranteeing autonomy for the five islands of Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Palawan, which would be administered as a single unit.”⁹⁵ The GOP delegation responded that they did not possess the authority to approve such demands. The MNLF responded with a declination to the GOP’s requests of a “ceasefire” and an MNLF review of GOP “economic programs for Muslims.”⁹⁶ Inability to compromise and resolve these issues led to a halt in the discussion and more fighting.⁹⁷ This meeting made no progress in searching for a peaceful solution to the conflict. Both parties departed with an understanding that they would attempt negotiation at a later time.⁹⁸

After the talks ended, the OIC continued to monitor the conflict between the MNLF and GOP. The conflict was responsible for the death of thousands and the displacement of millions.⁹⁹ The OIC eventually threatened the Philippines with an “oil embargo” if they refused to peacefully resolve the conflict with the MNLF in 1976.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Majul, *The Moro Struggle*, 907.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 908.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 907.

⁹⁹ Molloy, *The Question of an Alliance*, 825.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

The Philippines had already experienced the effects of an oil embargo emplaced on them during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.¹⁰¹ During this conflict, some Arab nations announced an embargo that would significantly decrease oil production and restrict trade with countries that supported Israel.¹⁰² The Philippines was eventually removed from the list of restricted countries.¹⁰³ However, the Philippines now clearly understood the detrimental impact of an Arab oil embargo on their country. In fear that another oil embargo would occur, the Philippines carefully reconsidered negotiations towards a sustainable peace. As a result, President Marcos agreed to a “ceasefire” and to meet with the MNLF to begin negotiations for a peace agreement.¹⁰⁴

Deliberations over what autonomous conditions would be granted to the Moros in Mindanao occurred at the close of 1976.¹⁰⁵ The meeting came shortly after the GOP’s development of “programs to improve the economic level of Muslims, housing projects for refugees, guarantees of religious freedom for Muslims, the return of a few hundred ex-rebels, more scholarships for young Muslims, an increase in Muslim appointees to civil office, and a marked reduction in hostilities” in Mindanao.¹⁰⁶

Philippine representative Imelda Marcos traveled to Libya to coordinate a delegation to meet with the MNLF. Discussions over what became the Tripoli Agreement took place between the GOP and the MNLF. President Mohamar Qadaffi of Libya mediated the OIC endorsed meeting held at Tripoli.¹⁰⁷ First Lady of the Philippines,

¹⁰¹ Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, “From The Pitfalls of Working for Peace in a Time of Political Decay,” in *Autonomy and Ethnic Conflict in South and South East Asia*, ed. Rajat Ganguly (New York: Routledge, 2012), 116.

¹⁰² A. F. Alhajji, “The Oil Weapon: Past, Present, and Future,” *Oil & Gas Journal*, May 2, 2005, <http://www.ogj.com/articles/print/volume-103/issue-17/general-interest/the-oil-weapon-past-present-and-future.html>.

¹⁰³ Robert Mabro, “The Oil Weapon: Can It Be Used Today,” *Harvard National Review* 29, no. 3 (2007): 57, <http://hir.harvard.edu/archives/1659>.

¹⁰⁴ Molloy, *The Question of an Alliance*, 825.

¹⁰⁵ Engineer, *The Moro Struggle*, 2114.

¹⁰⁶ Majul, *The Moro Struggle*, 908.

¹⁰⁷ Steven Rood, “From Interlocking Autonomy: Manila and Muslim Mindanao,” in *Autonomy and Armed Separatism in South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Michelle Ann Miller (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012), 262.

Imelda Marcos, was appointed as the official representative of the GOP to lead peace negotiations with Nur Misuari's MNLF.¹⁰⁸

The negotiations in 1976 between both parties initially brought forth an MNLF demand of autonomy for 25 provinces.¹⁰⁹ The OIC managed to reduce the requested number down to 13 provinces.¹¹⁰ The final draft of the settlement ended with an agreement to grant the Moros autonomous control of "the 13 Philippine provinces of historical Muslim influence."¹¹¹ The conditions would also end armed attacks from both ends. Finally, after years of conflict and extensive negotiations in Libya, the Tripoli Agreement was signed on 23 December 1976.

B. IMPLEMENTATION

The Tripoli Agreement was never completely implemented, primarily because the Philippine government took steps that neither side had agreed to and which the MNLF vehemently opposed. The original conditions that both groups agreed to were subjected to a plebiscite. The results strongly deviated from the original conditions produced and what the MNLF expected. The events following the plebiscite referendum signaled its downfall.

On March 25, 1977, the GOP announced the "autonomy of 13 provinces."¹¹² This would produce and formally recognize the 13 autonomous "provinces in Mindanao and Palawan."¹¹³ However, less than a month later, President Marcos "called for a plebiscite-referendum."¹¹⁴ The MNLF expressed great dissatisfaction and its opposition to the president's decision to hold a referendum. At no time during the peace negotiations had either party mentioned or discussed anything about conducting a referendum.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ Rood, *Interlocking Autonomy*, 262.

¹⁰⁹ May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 280.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Majul, *The Moro Struggle*, 908.

¹¹³ Rood, *Interlocking Autonomy*, 257.

¹¹⁴ Majul, *The Moro Struggle*, 908.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

The heavily protested referendum produced “two autonomous regional governments” in Mindanao instead of one single unit that was originally agreed on.¹¹⁶ The voting created Region IX that comprised of territory in Western Mindanao and Region XII that comprised of territory in Central Mindanao.¹¹⁷ Region IX was made up of the “Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan, Zamboanga del Norte, and Zamboanga del Sur” provinces.¹¹⁸ Region XII was made up of the “Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, North Cotabato, Maguindanao, and Sultan Kudarat” provinces.¹¹⁹ The referendum results reduced the initially discussed 13 provinces down to “10 provinces” between two autonomous regions.¹²⁰ President Marcos executed this plan, despite OIC warnings to implement what was originally discussed.¹²¹ The GOP’s exclusion of “South Cotabato, Davao del Sur, and Palawan” from the implementation was explained to the Moros as unimportant and irrelevant since “Muslims in these areas constituted a minority.”¹²² Even OIC actions that would award “observer status to the MNLF in 1978” would not scare President Marcos away from implementing the referendum’s results.¹²³ The MNLF saw the exclusion of provinces as another attempt to fragment Moro unity, weaken Moro strength, and as another opportunity to secede.¹²⁴

Though the framework of the government in Mindanao changed, most of the previous bureaucratic mechanisms and economic status remained unchanged. The creation of two separate autonomous regions did place some Moros in high-ranking bureaucratic positions; however, the majority of the office holders were identified as Marcos loyalists.¹²⁵ The economic situation in Mindanao still showed no promises of

¹¹⁶ May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 280.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Majul, *The Moro Struggle*, 908.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Rood, *Interlocking Autonomy*, 258.

¹²¹ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 117.

¹²² Majul, *The Moro Struggle*, 908.

¹²³ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 117.

¹²⁴ Majul, *The Moro Struggle*, 909.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

improvement, GOP military influence in the region was still strong, and bureaucratic actions by the region still required President Marcos' approval.¹²⁶

Deviation from the original agreement made it clear to Nur Misuari that "the Tripoli Agreement was ... null and void because the government had never intended to abide by it and had in fact violated it."¹²⁷ The original agreement promised the MNLF one autonomous region of 13 provinces, but instead created two separate autonomous regions with 10 provinces. The GOP failed to properly implement the Tripoli Agreement by splitting the three regions into three separate entities.¹²⁸ If the autonomy promised would not be honored, then the MNLF fight to separate from the state would continue.¹²⁹ As a result, 1977 brought the return of armed conflict between the MNLF and GOP and talks of secession.¹³⁰

C. CONCLUSION

The failure of the Tripoli Agreement can be attributed to the GOP's inability to completely implement the original conditions that both groups consented to at the signing of the agreement. Failure to completely implement the conditions worsened the situation and forced the MNLF to resume armed conflict in their quest for self-determination. Exclusivity was not a contributing factor to the collapse. There were no issues with exclusivity since all major Moro parties were involved. During the conflict there were no other separatist groups. Additionally, opposing Christian groups in the region had not been as violent and as vocal as the MNLF. The MNLF represented the Moro Muslims of Mindanao, while the GOP represented the state. This section discusses the effects of the failure to completely implement the agreement and how it led to the collapse of the Tripoli Agreement.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Majul, *The Moro Struggle*, 909.

¹²⁸ Engineer, *Struggle For A Separate Islamic State*, 2156.

¹²⁹ Majul, *The Moro Struggle*, 909.

¹³⁰ Molloy, *The Question of an Alliance*, 826.

Failure to completely implement conditions of the Tripoli Agreement was the major reason for the agreement's collapse. Ivan Molloy states that the MNLF accused the GOP of intentionally manipulating conditions of the agreement to allow political strength to remain with Manila.¹³¹ Molloy claims that President Marcos' plebiscite referendum, which was never discussed, allowed for the GOP to "water down the degree of self-determination it had initially agreed to grant the" Moros.¹³² Cesar Adib Majul adds that the MNLF "charged...the government with bad faith" when the referendum produced "two autonomous regions" of 10 provinces instead of the one autonomous region of 13 provinces that both parties agreed to.¹³³ Majul argues that once the GOP began executing the implementation of "two autonomous regions," it was evident that President Marcos had always maintained an agenda of keeping "the Muslims divided."¹³⁴

The MNLF saw this autonomous divide as a serious violation of the agreement.¹³⁵ The split of autonomy into two different bodies produced a more "limited effectiveness."¹³⁶ Nathan Gilbert Quimpo states that the referendum proves that President Marcos "was not really serious about a just and lasting peace in Mindanao."¹³⁷ Asghar Ali Engineer claims that the GOP "reneged and implemented what suited it."¹³⁸ The MNLF considered the agreement an official order from President Marcos.¹³⁹ Despite the many MNLF attempts to communicate their disapproval, President Marcos continued with the plebiscite referendum.¹⁴⁰ Doing so created "distrust" on both sides.¹⁴¹ The agreement produced little political benefits for the Moros and severely weakened the

¹³¹ Molloy, *The Question of an Alliance*, 826.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Majul, *The Moro Struggle*, 908.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 909.

¹³⁵ Rood, *Interlocking Autonomy*, 258.

¹³⁶ May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 280.

¹³⁷ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 116–17.

¹³⁸ Engineer, *The Moro Struggle*, 2114.

¹³⁹ S. P. Harish, *Towards Better Peace Processes: A Comparative Study of Attempts to Broker Peace with MNLF and GAM*. (Singapore, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, 2005).

¹⁴⁰ Harish, *Towards Better Peace Processes*, 6.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

MNLF.¹⁴² President Marcos' concept was simple. The division of power into smaller entities allowed for the GOP to maintain overarching control of the region and country.

If the original conditions had been completely implemented, regardless of whether or not economic and living standards improved, armed conflict between the GOP and MNLF may have been resolved. Instead the GOP executed what they desired and blamed the GOP's failure to completely implement conditions on "rifts within the MNLF" and not knowing "which MNLF leader to talk to."¹⁴³ As a result, by purposely misinterpreting the conditions, "the MNLF returned to its original demand of secession and fighting resumed" in Mindanao.¹⁴⁴ Thomas M. McKenna provides that these Moro calls for "full implementation of the agreement signed in Tripoli" would stretch into the 1980s.¹⁴⁵

In conclusion, the GOP's failure to completely implement the agreement was directly responsible for the collapse of the Tripoli Agreement. The GOP's failure to completely implement the agreement in combination with the results of a referendum that manipulated the autonomy defined at the signing of the agreement suggested to MNLF that establishing sustainable peace was never intended.

¹⁴² Thomas M. McKenna, "Mindanao People Unite: Failed Attempts at Muslim-Christian Unity," in *Brokering a Revolution: Cadres in a Philippine Insurgency*, ed. Rosanne Rutten (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008), 125.

¹⁴³ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 117.

¹⁴⁴ Molloy, *The Question of an Alliance*, 826.

¹⁴⁵ Thomas M. McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

III. 1996 FINAL PEACE AGREEMENT

The 1996 Final Peace Agreement marked another major attempt at peace between the Moros and Government of the Philippines (GOP). The willingness to meet with the Moros displayed the GOP's commitment to recovering from the failure of the Tripoli Agreement. Though the process yielded similar results to the Tripoli Agreement, the Final Peace Agreement of 1996 also provided lessons learned that were valuable to future attempts at resolution.

Failure to completely implement the Tripoli Agreement of 1976 caused a reemergence of violence and an internal struggle within the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The internal conflict eventually gave birth to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a separatist splinter group headed by Salamat Hashim.¹⁴⁶ Originally, Salamat Hashim engaged the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), deemed Nur Misuari unfit to lead the organization, and sought permission to seat himself as the head of the MNLF.¹⁴⁷ However, the former "chairman of the foreign affairs bureau" failed at his attempt to dethrone Nur Misuari as MNLF chairman, resulting in the MILF's creation.¹⁴⁸ The MILF officially became its own unit "in the 1980s, advocating a more Islamic identity based approach to the Moro struggle."¹⁴⁹ The breakaway of the MILF from the MNLF can be explained by the contrast in ideological viewpoints between the MNLF's Nur Misuari and the MILF's Salamat Hashim.¹⁵⁰ Specifically, Hashim did not support the agreement between the MNLF and the GOP during the creation of the Tripoli Agreement of 1976.¹⁵¹ This non-concurrence eventually led to the split of the Islamic MILF from the "secular MNLF."¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ Martin and Tuminez, *Toward Peace*, 3.

¹⁴⁷ May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 281.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Martin and Tuminez, *Toward Peace*, 3.

¹⁵⁰ Gordon P. Means, *Political Islam in Southeast Asia* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009).

¹⁵¹ Means, *Political Islam*, 201.

¹⁵² Eric Gutierrez and Saturnino Borrás, Jr., "The Moro Conflict: Landlessness and Misdirected State Policies," *Policy Studies* 8 (2004).

Following the People Power Revolution and forceful exit of President Ferdinand Marcos, Corazon Aquino assumed the helm of the presidency. An attempt to resolve the conflict in Mindanao was initiated by President Corazon Aquino in 1986.¹⁵³ Discussions between the GOP and the MNLF would bring revisions to Mindanao's autonomy during the production of the Philippine Constitution in 1987.¹⁵⁴ The original request recommended the recognition of Mindanao and other regions in the country as individual and autonomous states under one federal entity.¹⁵⁵ A downgrade of this recommendation consequently mapped out a certain degree of autonomy for Mindanao. A specially assigned Regional Consultative Commission was tasked to formulate specifics of the autonomous conditions.¹⁵⁶ The Philippine Congress later assumed this responsibility and finalized these conditions. The Philippine Congress eventually became responsible for the passing of the "Organic Law (Republic Act 6734)."¹⁵⁷ Republic Act 6734 was the law that defined the autonomy and established the rules that governed the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).¹⁵⁸

The talks between President Aquino and Nur Misuari produced a law that established the ARMM.¹⁵⁹ The Organic Law passed in 1989 led to a plebiscite that resulted in the provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi officially becoming part of the ARMM.¹⁶⁰ The ARMM would be made up of four out of the 13 provinces that the MNLF had been fighting for. These were the only provinces that voted in favor of becoming part of the ARMM.¹⁶¹ The final composition of what became the autonomous region was an extreme deviation from the MNLF's original demand. The

¹⁵³ BBC News Asia, "Guide to the Philippines Conflict," BBC News, October 8, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-17038024>.

¹⁵⁴ Rood, *Interlocking Autonomy*, 257.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 263.

¹⁵⁷ Rood, *Interlocking Autonomy*, 257.

¹⁵⁸ Republic of the Philippines, Commission on Elections, accessed March 02, 2015, <http://www.comelec.gov.ph/?r=References/RelatedLaws/ElectionLaws/ARMM/ra6734/RA6734Art1>.

¹⁵⁹ BBC News Asia, *Guide to the Philippines Conflict*.

¹⁶⁰ Rood, *Interlocking Autonomy*, 257.

¹⁶¹ Government of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, *ARMM History*.

MNLF's exclusion from the plebiscite led to protests against the process.¹⁶² However, upon conclusion of the plebiscite, the ARMM finally began functioning as an autonomous entity in 1990.¹⁶³

This temporary solution would momentarily reduce armed conflict throughout the Mindanao region; however, the fact remained that the MNLF was still without a peace treaty. Since the Organic Law only covered a portion of the original demands, it was obvious that the MNLF would eventually grow unsatisfied with the terms crafted in 1987.

Fidel Ramos eventually succeeded President Corazon Aquino in 1992. In an effort to establish peace between the GOP and the MNLF, "former [head of the] Armed Forces of the Philippines Fidel V. Ramos," now turned president, would attempt to develop a peace agreement.¹⁶⁴ President Ramos surprised the Moros with his request to restart talks with MNLF's Nur Misuari.¹⁶⁵ Consequently, the GOP and MNLF began another round at the negotiating table. These talks between the MNLF and GOP created the Final Peace Agreement of 1996.¹⁶⁶ This agreement also came to be known as the "Final Agreement on the Implementation of the Tripoli Agreement."¹⁶⁷

A. NEGOTIATION OF PEACE AGREEMENT

The negotiations that produced the 1996 Final Peace Agreement were mediated by the OIC and occurred in two phases. The first phase of negotiations updated prior laws that assisted with legitimizing the ARMM as a functioning government. The second phase established institutions that ARMM needed to function.

President Ramos' decision to revive peace talks brought the GOP, MNLF, OIC and Indonesia together for another attempt at reaching sustainable peace.¹⁶⁸ The OIC

¹⁶² Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 118.

¹⁶³ Rood, *Interlocking Autonomy*, 257.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 281.

¹⁶⁶ Rood, *Interlocking Autonomy*, 257.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 281.

mediated the discussions, while Indonesia hosted the negotiation.¹⁶⁹ The discussions brought the development of a Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD) and of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD).¹⁷⁰ In the SZOPAD, cities and provincial areas under the jurisdiction of the Tripoli agreement would be subjected to a three-year effort that worked on improving peace and development in Mindanao; establishing the SPCPD involved creating an institution that managed and monitored all organizational activities occurring in the SZOPAD dedicated to improving peace and development. The chairman of the SPCPD was also afforded the opportunity to appoint a religious advisory council for advice during their time in office; the SPCPD received its monetary support and remained under the control of the president. Nur Misuari received the first appointment as chair of the SPCPD.¹⁷¹

The discussions between the GOP and MNLF were also responsible for the creation of a Consultative Assembly and the retirement of the Bangsa Moro Army (BMA).¹⁷² The Consultative Assembly was comprised of 81 members, where 44 of the members would be assigned to the MNLF. The Consultative Assembly's purpose was to convene, consult, and appropriately advise the SPCPD. It was also allowed to communicate policy recommendations through the SPCPD chairman.¹⁷³ The BMA, which served as the MNLF's military component was to be eliminated under conditions of the agreement. The BMA's services, however, would not be terminated. Upon successful disbandment of the MNLF's military forces, "7,500 BMA troops were to be recruited into the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP)."¹⁷⁴ The remaining soldiers who did not transition into army or police force were provided with enrollment into state developed program that assisted soldiers with transition back into civil society. This program focused on "socio-economic, cultural, and educational" lessons that would assist soldiers and family members in obtaining

¹⁶⁹ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 118.

¹⁷⁰ May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 282.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 282.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

“education, technical skills, and livelihood training” that could be utilized in the outside world.¹⁷⁵

The Final Peace Agreement was executed in two stages.¹⁷⁶ The first stage replaced the 1987 Organic Law that gave recognition to the ARMM with the creation of legislation that would allow for the Final Peace Agreement to take effect. Upon presidential approval, the legislation would be subjected to “a plebiscite in the SZOPAD within two years from the establishment of the SPCPD.”¹⁷⁷ This plebiscite determined what areas would become a part of the region.¹⁷⁸ The first stage was to be accomplished in no more than three years. The second stage brought the development “of an executive council, legislative assembly, and administration with legislative powers in the area of autonomy” and the creation “of Special Regional Security Forces (SRSF).”¹⁷⁹ The security forces to be established would be “a PNP regional command” within the Mindanao region. The second stage also addressed education. This stage recognized Islamic schools, implemented an educational curriculum that taught both Islamic and Filipino ideologies, and allowed for the Arabic language to be utilized in classrooms.¹⁸⁰ Additionally, the autonomy granted during the second stage allowed for the Moro government to “contract foreign and domestic loans.”¹⁸¹

The first draft of the Final Peace Agreement took four years to develop and was completed in June 1996.¹⁸² The completion of the draft agreement was met with protests from the Christian political community of Mindanao.¹⁸³ This community contested the agreement in the form of demonstrations and warned that violence would occur if the

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 283.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 118.

¹⁷⁹ May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 283.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 118.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

agreement were not reconsidered.¹⁸⁴ Congress accused President Ramos of ‘selling out’ to the Moros. The Senate lobbied for the reduction of the autonomous power granted to the Consultative Assembly and SPCPD. The House of Representatives claimed that they would halt funding to the autonomous region. A petition from a number of Congressional legislators and a provincial governor was even submitted to the Supreme Court declaring that the agreement was unconstitutional.¹⁸⁵ In the end, the Moros lost their “44 MNLF members in the Consultative Assembly...and the provisions of the agreement which placed specified government agencies under the control and/or supervision of the SPCPD were deleted.”¹⁸⁶ After the political backlash, President Ramos approved the adjustments to the agreement; however, President Ramos held firm on the major conditions.¹⁸⁷ The Final Peace Agreement between the GOP and the MNLF was finally signed in September 1996.¹⁸⁸

B. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the agreement brought disappointing results towards achieving a satisfying level of self-determination and introduced another insurgency. Though some labeled the Final Peace Agreement a major success, the changes made significantly weakened the autonomy originally promised.¹⁸⁹ As a result, the autonomous government of the ARMM was ineffective in its attempts to improve economic growth and the Moro quality of life.¹⁹⁰ Additionally, the GOP was left with having to deal with MILF that split from the MNLF due to ideological differences.

The MILF’s agenda was more religious than that of the secular MNLF.¹⁹¹ The MILF’s exclusion from the agreement had warranted the need for a GOP response. At the

¹⁸⁴ May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 283.

¹⁸⁵ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 118.

¹⁸⁶ May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 284.

¹⁸⁷ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 118.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Martin and Tuminez, *Toward Peace*, 3.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Bacani, *Mindanao Peace Talks*, 5.

conclusion of the signing, the GOP shortly began negotiations with the MILF in January 1997.¹⁹² The inability to achieve any type of progress with the GOP led the MILF to respond with armed conflict.¹⁹³ During GOP and MNLF negotiations, the MILF had amassed a great number of soldiers and sympathizers to its cause.¹⁹⁴ They had collected “more than 12,000 armed fighters in 13 major camps and 33 satellite enclaves.”¹⁹⁵ The MILF successfully established itself as a bigger threat than Nur Misuari’s MNLF. In March 2000, President Joseph Estrada responded to the deadlock in negotiations by declaring war against the MILF.¹⁹⁶

Concurrently, the ARMM faced several problems during implementation of the agreement. During the early stages of Nur Misuari’s tenure as SPCPD chairman, enormous amounts of money began funneling its way into the region by way of the GOP and various external organizations in support of Mindanao’s growth and development.¹⁹⁷ Nur Misuari also received plenty of financial support to fund economic projects from neighboring states and various Muslim organizations. In a five-year stretch, the GOP donated approximately 1.65 billion U.S. dollars to the region.¹⁹⁸ The United Nations Multi-Donor Assistance Program also pledged its support to Mindanao with donations estimated at approximately 319 million U.S. dollars.¹⁹⁹

In 2001, the SPCPD chairman was accused of mismanaging funds. Nur Misuari’s colleagues had discredited him from his position due to poor “management of funds, arbitrary leadership style, patronage, and corrupt practices.”²⁰⁰ Nur Misuari was accused of stealing money from various economic projects and utilizing expensive budgets during

¹⁹² Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 118.

¹⁹³ Mel C. Labrador, “The Philippines in 2001: High Drama, a New President, and Setting the Stage For Recovery,” *Asian Survey* 42, no. 1 (2002), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2002.42.1.141>.

¹⁹⁴ Bacani, *Mindanao Peace Talks*, 5.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 122.

¹⁹⁷ Means, *Political Islam*, 200.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Means, *Political Islam*, 200.

overseas travel. Across the region, these accusations were accepted by some as reasons why the economic situation and lives of the Moros had not improved.²⁰¹ As a result of the accusations, Nur Misuari, under the approval of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, was removed from his positions as ARMM governor and SPCPD chairman. Misuari heavily contested what he believed to be an unlawful removal; however, he was eventually replaced by Muslimin G. Sema as SPCPD chairman and Farouk Hussin as ARMM governor.²⁰²

Nur Misuari responded to his removal as ARMM governor and SPCPD chairman with armed attacks on Philippine military bases on Jolo. He commanded 600 ARMM soldiers to attack four military bases.²⁰³ Nur Misuari repositioned himself in Malaysia, but was later returned to face charges from the GOP.²⁰⁴ The former MNLF head was eventually “charged with rebellion, sedition, and corruption.”²⁰⁵ His actions were punished with a six and half year sentence.²⁰⁶ Nur Misuari would promise a return; however, his absence left his replacements attempting to run Mindanao under the conditions of the Final Peace Agreement.²⁰⁷

C. CONCLUSION

The 1996 Final Peace Agreement between the GOP and the MNLF is a failed peace agreement.²⁰⁸ Rather than achieving sustainable peace, tension and fighting continued to build. Jacques Bertrand states that the failure of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement can be credited to numerous factors such as: the MNLF’s inability to effectively manage the ARMM, the weakness of the autonomy granted and institutions created from the Final Peace Agreement, the fractionalization between the MNLF and

²⁰¹ Jacques Bertrand, “Peace and Conflict in the Southern Philippines: Why the 1996 Peace Agreement Is Fragile,” *Pacific Affairs* 73, no. 1 (2000), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2672283>.

²⁰² Means, *Political Islam*, 200.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 123.

²⁰⁷ Means, *Political Islam*, 201.

²⁰⁸ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 123.

MILF, and its inability to address important past grievances. While all reasons listed by Bertrand have played important roles in the agreement's collapse, this study argues that two reasons were directly responsible for the failure of the peace agreement. This study argues that the MNLF's failure to completely implement the agreement and the exclusion of major non-state actors like the MILF and Christians of Mindanao ultimately caused the Final Peace Agreement's failure. First, the MNLF's inability to completely implement the agreement created a corrupt Nur Misuari and local government environment.²⁰⁹ Corruption and the misuse of funds by Misuari hindered the peace agreement's full ability to be completely implemented. Second, exclusion of the MILF and Christians by the GOP from the agreement hindered the chances of sustainable peace throughout the region. Though armed conflict between the GOP and MNLF momentarily ceased, the MILF continued armed conflict where the MNLF left off. Additionally, exclusion of the Christians left key grievances like the "restoration of lost lands" that caused the "displacement of Muslims from their lands" due to Christian migration forced by the GOP unresolved.²¹⁰

Nur Misuari's failure to completely implement the agreement within the ARMM, led to corrupt practices. During his term, there was increasing doubt in Nur Misuari's ability to lead the region amongst the Moro population.²¹¹ Many people across the region believed that hiring practices favored MNLF sympathizers and that corruption in the regional government was blatant.²¹² Gordon Means states that during Nur Misuari's reign as governor, the ARMM received close to two billion U.S dollars from the GOP and United Nations towards growth and the development of the region.²¹³ Nur Misuari was found guilty of misusing ARMM funds.²¹⁴ During this time, improvement would be absent and the ARMM was still considered "amongst the nation's poorest" provinces in

²⁰⁹ Bertrand, *Peace and Conflict*, 49.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 51–52.

²¹¹ May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 284.

²¹² Ibid., 284–285.

²¹³ Means, *Political Islam*, 200.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 200–201.

the Philippines.²¹⁵ If Nur Misuari completely implemented the agreement, institutional systems that affect the region's economic situation and quality of life of the Moros may have produced a different outcome. His corrupt practices hindered the Final Peace Agreement from taking its course. The agreement's potential and ability to determine success was blocked by Nur Misuari's incomplete implementation of the Final Peace Agreement. Mel Labrador also credits the agreement's collapse to incomplete implementation.²¹⁶ While this study points to the MNLF as the reason the agreement was not fully implemented, the MNLF accuses the GOP of not following through with the conditions set by the 1996 Final Peace Agreement.²¹⁷ Because of Misuari's actions, "the agreement failed to get past the initial transition phase and the full Muslim autonomy promised in the accord was not achieved."²¹⁸

The exclusion of the MILF from the peace agreement led to a continuation of armed conflict within the region. Exclusion from the peace agreement initiated the start of substantial fighting by the MILF against the GOP.²¹⁹ Fighting between the MILF and the GOP began in less than one month's signing of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement.²²⁰ Since the GOP chose to exclusively work with the MNLF on the 1996 Final Peace Agreement, the MILF attacks that followed its signing forced the GOP into another set of negotiations.²²¹

²¹⁵ May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 285.

²¹⁶ Mel C. Labrador, "The Philippines in 2000: In Search of a Silver Lining," *Asian Survey* 41, no. 1 (2001), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2001.41.1.221>.

²¹⁷ The Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, "Today Is Just the Beginning of a Long Process," *The PCIJ Blog*, October 15, 2012, <http://pcij.org/blog/2012/10/15/today-is-just-the-beginning-of-a-long-process>.

²¹⁸ Labrador, *The Philippines in 2000*, 225.

²¹⁹ Renato Cruz De Castro, "Weakness and Gambits in Philippine Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century," *Pacific Affairs* 83, no. 4 (2010), <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu/docview/820543641/fulltextPDF/FAE01A6D474D4FD7PQ/1?accountid=12702>.

²²⁰ Robert F. Trager and Dessislava P. Zagorcheva, "Deterring Terrorism: It Can Be Done," *International Security* 30, no. 3 (2005/2006), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4137488>.

²²¹ Labrador, *The Philippines in 2000*, 225.

The exclusion of this non-state actor delivered armed conflict with demands for “the creation of a separate Islamic state as soon as possible.”²²² The completion of the Final Peace Agreement with the MNLF, eventually led Philippine President Fidel Ramos to open a separate peace negotiation process with the MILF. A deadlock in negotiations between 1996 and 2000 brought President Joseph Estrada’s call for war against the MILF.²²³ The MILF and other excluded groups, like the Christians and Lumads, were left with unanswered grievances and demands from the GOP. The GOP and MNLF hoped that the peace agreement’s expected increase in foreign aid and future improvements in quality of life would capture the undivided support of the Christians and indigenous peoples of the region.²²⁴ If the MILF had been originally included during the MNLF negotiation process, the probability of the continuation of armed conflict would have been unlikely. The signing of the peace agreement would likely have been extended past 1996; however, additional time to include, discuss, and address the issues of all groups concerned would have increased the chances for sustainable peace in Mindanao. The completion of the Final Peace Agreement left only one out of the many groups on Mindanao satisfied.

Exclusion of the Christians, another influential non-state actor, contributed to the derailment of the agreement. Exclusion from the process left longstanding grievances unanswered. Their inclusion was vital since a majority of the provinces on Mindanao had Christian majority populations.²²⁵ It was important that the GOP moderated “extreme demands of the MNLF” due to “potential dangers arousing a non-Muslim backlash” in Mindanao.²²⁶ Excluding the Christians suggests that the likelihood of sustainable peace was unlikely. Jacques Bertrand states that the exclusion of important issues like the Moro “land ownership” prevented the Final Peace Agreement from becoming a

²²² De Castro, *Weakness and Gambits*, 703.

²²³ Bacani, *Mindanao Peace Talks*, 5.

²²⁴ Bertrand, *Peace and Conflict*, 52.

²²⁵ R. J. May, “Muslim and Tribal Filipinos,” in the *Philippines After Marcos*, ed. R. J. May and Francisco Nemenzo (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 124.

²²⁶ May, *Muslim and Tribal Filipinos*, 124.

“comprehensive resolution of conflict in Mindanao.”²²⁷ During the GOP sponsored Christian migration into Mindanao, the Moros were subjected to “decades of displacement...from their lands.”²²⁸ The displacement caused years of tension between the Christian and Muslim populations. Bertrand claims that addressing land issues would further progress Christian and Muslim relations.²²⁹ If a solution to the land issues can be fashioned, economic opportunities for the Moros would be created and Moro poverty throughout the region may decrease. If land issues are left unanswered, then Moro “frustrations” may lead into the “resumption of hostilities.”²³⁰ This was certainly a major factor resulting in the failure of the Final Peace Agreement.

In closing, the MNLF’s inability to completely implement the agreement and exclusion of the MILF and Christians with grievances like land rights were the major drivers in causing the Final Peace Agreement’s failure. The economic situation and Moro quality of life would have likely been different if Nur Misuari completely implemented the agreement. If the MILF and other groups like the Christians were included during the negotiations, unanswered grievances may have been resolved and the continuation of armed conflict in the region may have been unlikely. Growing tensions would likely have been low and the probability of the Final Peace Agreement’s success would have been higher if important and sensitive issues such as land disputes between the Christians and Muslims were discussed and resolved.

Others reasons have contributed to the failure of the peace agreement; however, issues with the MNLF’s inability to completely implement the peace agreement and its exclusivity were the major reasons why the 1996 Final Peace Agreement failed.

²²⁷ Bertrand, *Peace and Conflict*, 51.

²²⁸ Ibid., 52.

²²⁹ Bertrand, *Peace and Conflict*, 52.

²³⁰ Ibid.

IV. 2008 MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT ON ANCESTRAL DOMAIN

Philippine President Joseph Estrada's order for war in 2000 against the Moro Islamic Liberation Force (MILF) insurgents was reversed after the relinquishment of his office to Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo; President Macapagal-Arroyo's peaceful approach and change in policy in early 2001 brought the MILF back to the negotiating table.²³¹ A resumption of GOP-MILF peace negotiations was supported with a Malaysian mediated agreement for a mutual ceasefire in August 2001; in the same year, the Government of the Philippines (GOP) passed legislation in an effort to expand the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in accordance with Final Peace Agreement of 1996.²³² Senate Bill 2129 proposed a further expansion of the ARMM's autonomous control of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. The approval of an expansion stretched its domain "to 15 provinces and 14 cities."²³³ The bill was followed by a plebiscite in August 2001.²³⁴ Voters cast their votes in a decision "to join the four, small Muslim majority provinces already in the ARMM."²³⁵ Rejection by the Christian communities of Mindanao was obvious in the final results.²³⁶ However, the outcome expanded the ARMM's control with the additions of the Basilan Province and Marawi City.²³⁷ The results finalized in the GOP's Republic Act (RA) No. 9054. RA No. 9054 or the Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao served as the replacement to Organic Law, better known as the RA No. 6734.²³⁸

²³¹ Labrador, *The Philippines*, 146.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Labrador, *The Philippines*, 146.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ CNN World, "Philippine Provinces Reject Autonomy Plan," CNN, August 15, 2001, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/08/15/phil.vote/>.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Labrador, *The Philippines*, 146.

²³⁸ DENR-USAID's Philippine Environment Governance Project (EcoGov), "Question and Answers On Natural Resources Management and Other Pertinent Provisions: Republic Act No. 9054 Organic Act For the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)," USAID, last modified June 2003, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACU004.pdf.

Continued peace talks led to the creation of the “Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001” and the “Implementing Guidelines on the Security Aspect of the GRP-MILF Tripoli Agreement of Peace of 2001.”²³⁹ This agreement continued the ceasefire and established the “Joint Coordinating Committees on the Cessation of Hostilities, the International Monitoring Team (composed of representatives from Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Libya), and the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group.”²⁴⁰ The agreement was signed in May 2002 and served as a one of the many precursors to the Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain of 2008.²⁴¹ This agreement focused on security, while a preceding arrangement in 2002 focused on “humanitarian, rehabilitation, and development issues.”²⁴² In 2005, discussions concerning ancestral land belonging to the Moros surfaced. Early 2006 further defined the arrangements on “points of agreement on ancestral domain” that was signed in September 2005 between the GOP and MILF.²⁴³

Later that year, Malaysia hosted formalized talks between the GOP and MILF in September to map out which area was considered ancestral domain.²⁴⁴ The GOP extended an offer to transform the ARMM into what would be called the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE). Details of the offer included the expansion of the ARMM with “613 villages...identified as having Muslim majorities” and “greater fiscal autonomy” that allowed for an increase in the “share of profits from natural resources, including minerals and petroleum.”²⁴⁵ The MILF rejected the offer and returned with a counterproposal that included absolute ownership of all resources and 1,000 extra

²³⁹ Hurights Osaka, “Mindanao Conflict: In Search of Peace and Human Rights,” Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center, Hurights Osaka, accessed November 5, 2014, <http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section2/2008/12/mindanao-conflict-in-search-of-peace-and-human-rights.html>.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Means, *Political Islam*, 215.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 216.

²⁴⁵ Means, *Political Islam*, 216.

villages; a stalemate between both groups temporarily halted peace talks between the GOP and MILF.²⁴⁶

The MILF also began showing signs of decline in strength; inability to resolve conflicts internally resulted in the creation of different factions within the organization. The MILF also announced that even if an agreement were to be signed, decommissioning of their army would not be executed.²⁴⁷ Additionally, a regional conflict involving a MILF faction against the Ampatuan family exposed that a transfer of governing powers to the MILF from the powerful oligarchs of Mindanao was extremely difficult. The MILF's war within made peace seem unreachable. On the other end, GOP victories against the Abu Sayyaf insurgency from 2006 to 2007 further halted peace talks with the MILF. In June 2007, a kidnapping of a civilian led the GOP to further question whether peace talks should even be continued. The search for the MILF-kidnapped Italian priest led a group of Philippine Marines into an ambush. All 14 Marines were killed.²⁴⁸ This incident was responsible for stopping GOP and MILF peace negotiations scheduled for August 2007.

A. NEGOTIATION OF PEACE AGREEMENT

The road that led to the 2008 Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) was a turbulent one. Talks to achieve conflict resolution between the GOP and MILF eventually occurred in late 2007.²⁴⁹ A disagreement in the control of natural resources on Mindanao halted the progress of the negotiations. The GOP stated that in the laws of the Constitution, natural resources are always completely controlled by the government.²⁵⁰ The MILF argued that this was in violation of the agreement during their peace talks in 2006; the MILF's discontent in the matter led to a threat of non-attendance in a Malaysian hosted peace negotiation in December 2007.²⁵¹ The GOP later stated that

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Means, *Political Islam*, 217.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

a constitutional change to incorporate the formation of a federal Bangsamoro would be considered; this GOP consideration resulted in the resurfacing of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which claimed that agreement between the GOP and MILF was considered a violation of 1996 Final Peace Agreement.²⁵² Once again, inability to come to an agreement placed the process in deadlock status.²⁵³

A brief pause in the peace process occurred in early 2008; however, negotiations found their way back after Malaysia's self-removal from the process.²⁵⁴ Malaysia announced that they would remove themselves from the process due to lack of progress, hoping that it would push both groups in reattempting to complete the agreement. Malaysia's troops played a major role by monitoring the mutual ceasefire between the GOP and MILF forces. Malaysia's departure produced fear and resulted in both ends accusing the other of stalling negotiations.²⁵⁵ The GOP responded to the redeployment of troops back to Malaysia by increasing troop presence in Mindanao. The MILF responded to the increase of GOP presence with threats of heightened violence.²⁵⁶

Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's team eventually hashed out details on the concept behind the BJE.²⁵⁷ This was a direct result of concern that extreme violence would soon be coming if negotiations further stalled.²⁵⁸ The BJE granted an extension of the ARMM's autonomous control.²⁵⁹ Both groups formulated a draft agreement that the International Crisis Group (ICG) described "as an extraordinary and radical document giving the BJE far more sweeping powers than what the 2005 Helsinki agreement between the Indonesian Government and the Acehese rebels extended to

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Allen Hicken, "The Philippines in 2008: Peace-building, War-fighting, and Crisis Management," *Asian Survey* 49, no. 1 (2009), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as/2009.49.1.193>.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 194.

²⁵⁷ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 126.

²⁵⁸ Hicken, *The Philippines in 2008*, 194.

²⁵⁹ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 126.

autonomous Aceh.”²⁶⁰ The BJE concept would welcome “an additional 712 barangays” into the ARMM, and would also be subjected to a plebiscite following the agreement’s signing.²⁶¹

After years and years of negotiating, the GOP and MILF finally arrived at an agreement that granted the Moros an expansion of the ARMM into a suitably sized autonomous region.²⁶² The agreement also allowed for the Moros to exercise control over “police and internal security forces,...education ...and ...natural resources within the territory.”²⁶³ Lastly, the Moros were free to design “banking ...and political institutions” for the region.²⁶⁴ This autonomous region to be established was called the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE). The signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) was booked for August 2008 and scheduled to be hosted by Malaysia.²⁶⁵

The signing of the MOA-AD did not occur as planned. Government officials from the Christian community of Mindanao greeted the signing of the agreement with discontent.²⁶⁶ These politicians labeled the GOP supported agreement “as a sell-out to the Moro rebels.”²⁶⁷ Others described the agreement as “an unnecessary sacrifice of the country’s territorial integrity.”²⁶⁸ Some accused President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of utilizing the constitutional amendment process as a method to extend her time in office.²⁶⁹ Local governments of proposed areas to be annexed into the BJE submitted a petition to the Supreme Court calling for a temporary halt to the MOA-AD signing and a

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Hicken, *The Philippines in 2008*, 194.

²⁶² Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 114.

²⁶³ Hicken, *The Philippines in 2008*, 194.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 114.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Hicken, *The Philippines in 2008*, 194.

²⁶⁹ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 114.

thorough review of the agreement.²⁷⁰ On the day prior to the signing scheduled for August 5, 2008, the Supreme Court ordered a restraining order in response to petitions submitted, that prevented the GOP from participating in the signing of the MOA-AD.²⁷¹ The Supreme Court investigated the petitions and ruled against “the MOA-AD’s constitutionality.”²⁷²

B. IMPLEMENTATION

Due to the judicial ruling, the MOA-AD was never given the opportunity to be implemented. The GOP eventually backed out and called an end to the negotiation process. Had the agreement been signed, the GOPs behavior during the negotiation process indicates that complete implementation would be unlikely. This section discusses the events that led to the collapse that prevented MOA-AD implementation.

The restraining order and Supreme Court investigation signaled the start of an end to the MOA-AD. Failure to sign the agreement re-started armed conflict between the GOP and MILF. The GOP blamed the re-start of violence on the MILF and provided that future peace negotiations in Mindanao would be inclusive of all groups rather than just one. As a result, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo disbanded all negotiating efforts. The GOP eventually dissolved the peace panel and quickly initiated a movement to combat ongoing MILF attacks.²⁷³

In the 8–7 vote that declared the agreement unconstitutional, the Supreme Court described the mechanism used to develop the agreement as an abuse of power.²⁷⁴ President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s abandonment of peace efforts with the MILF and the Supreme Court’s ruling terminated any remaining hope for the MOA-AD to be

²⁷⁰ Hicken, *The Philippines in 2008*, 194.

²⁷¹ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 114.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Hicken, *The Philippines in 2008*, 195.

²⁷⁴ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 114.

signed. Failure to sign the 2008 agreement led to more violence, deaths, and displacement.²⁷⁵

C. CONCLUSION

The judicial ruling that the MOA-AD was unconstitutional brought an end to the agreement between the GOP and MILF. Nathan Quimpo attributes the failure of the agreement to the following problems: the agreement gave the Moros too much autonomy, the unpreparedness for protests from the Christian political community of Mindanao, and the GOP's fixation with constitutional change as a way of facilitating the MOA-AD's implementation.²⁷⁶ While all three factors played roles in the collapse, this study suggests one other reason that was the major contributor to the agreement's failure. Failure of the 2008 agreement can be blamed on the exclusivity of the negotiation process. Exclusivity of the negotiations perpetuated armed conflict in the region. If the negotiation process been more inclusive, then the "trauma" caused by the "'botched' MOA-AD" would have been unlikely.²⁷⁷

The MOA-AD proposed the BJE concept, which addressed Moro land issues and proposed an autonomous arrangement that would have allowed the Moros to obtain their long desired self-determination.²⁷⁸ These conditions were thoroughly discussed by both the GOP and MILF.²⁷⁹ At the conclusion of the agreement, the GOP stated that under the laws of the Philippine Constitution, all territorial reconfigurations must be subjected to a plebiscite.²⁸⁰ As a result, the requirement for a plebiscite was included into the framework of the MOA-AD.²⁸¹

²⁷⁵ Hurights Osaka, *Mindanao Conflict*.

²⁷⁶ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 126–27.

²⁷⁷ Claudia Hofmann, "Peace Negotiations in the Philippines: The Government, the MILF and the International NGOs," United States Institute of Peace, April 28, 2001, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PB%2091.pdf>.

²⁷⁸ May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 287.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ Government of the Philippines, "Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain," Presidential Communications Development and Strategic Planning Office, August 5, 2008, <http://pcdsp.gov.ph/downloads/2012/10/MOA—Ancestral-Domain-August-5-2008.pdf>.

The MILF completely disagreed with submitting the boundaries under conditions of the MOA-AD through a plebiscite.²⁸² Historically, results of past plebiscites have changed the original terms of the previous failed agreements. The Tripoli Agreement of 1976 and the Final Peace Agreement of 1996 were both subjected to plebiscites and produced results that gave the MNLF less territory and autonomous coverage than what was originally discussed. The disappointing results of the 1976 and 1996 plebiscites for the MNLF ultimately contributed to the return of violence in the region. Ronald May discusses the MILF's opposition to plebiscites due to knowledge of past outcomes that resulted in watered down autonomy.²⁸³ If the GOP wanted to completely implement the agreement, then the GOP should have worked to eliminate the requirement for a plebiscite from the constitution. Additionally, if past plebiscites are known to produce unsatisfactory results, why go through all the effort of negotiating something that would be ultimately opposed?

The exclusion of important groups from negotiations to reach the MOA-AD of 2008 played a significant role in the failure of the agreement. The Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center (Hurights Osaka) states that the GOP reconsidered and ultimately failed to sign the agreement due to backlash from groups left out of the negotiation process, especially the Christian government officials in Mindanao.²⁸⁴ Protests by the Mindanao Christians were pivotal in turning the GOP against the 2008 agreement.²⁸⁵ Displeased with the conditions of the agreement, Christian politicians submitted a petition to the Philippine Supreme Court to investigate the legality of the agreement.²⁸⁶ Additionally, Thomas Lum states that these excluded groups also provided some form of opposition to the 2008 agreement: "splinter groups of the MILF, such as the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement,...MNLF leaders who fear loss of political influence under a new entity, powerful local families or clans, and members of the

²⁸² May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 287.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Hurights Osaka, *Mindanao Conflict*.

²⁸⁵ Quimpo, *The Pitfalls*, 126.

²⁸⁶ Thomas Lum, "The Republic of the Philippines and U.S. Interests," Congressional Research Service, April 5, 2012, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33233.pdf>.

government and army who want to see the MILF further weakened.”²⁸⁷ If President Macapagal-Arroyo included Christian representation during the negotiation process, the petition that led to the unconstitutionality ruling by the GOP’s judicial branch may have never been submitted. Consequently, an inclusive agreement may have ceased influential non-state actor opposition and may have increased the likelihood of approval.

Gordon Means also states that during the negotiation process of this agreement, the MNLF had expressed to the GOP that any agreement signed between with the MILF was an infringement on the Final Peace Agreement signed in 1996.²⁸⁸ Additionally, Steven Rood states that various government officials within Mindanao “objected to the lack of consultation, before the agreement, on the scope of geographic coverage, and the powers being offered.”²⁸⁹ Rood adds that populations of proposed areas to be included into the BJE should have been included in the negotiation process. Jennifer M. Keister states that this event provides a perfect example of how influential “politically and economically powerful non-Moros in Mindanao” were during this process.²⁹⁰ Had the peace negotiation included representation from all groups from the region like the Christian community, the MNLF, the MILF, and the indigenous peoples, the probability of signing the agreement would have been more likely.

In closing, exclusivity of the agreement heavily contributed to the downfall of the 2008 MOA-AD. Had the agreement been more inclusive and completely implemented, the 2008 agreement may have likely succeeded.

²⁸⁷ Lum, *The Republic of the Philippines*, 20.

²⁸⁸ Means, *Political Islam*, 216.

²⁸⁹ Rood, *Interlocking Autonomy*, 265.

²⁹⁰ Jennifer M. Keister, “A Diplomatic Milestone for Mindanao,” United States Institute of Peace, November 29, 2012, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/A%20diplomatic%20milestone%20for%20Mindanao.pdf>.

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V. 2014 COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT ON THE BANGSAMORO

The 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) is the latest peace agreement dealing with the Moro conflict in Mindanao. During the course of this conflict, the Government of the Philippines (GOP) and the Moros have made several attempts at peace, but have been unable to achieve conflict resolution. The latest agreement has seen a turbulent path, where some might question if sustainable peace will ever be reached. Many hope that the CAB will do what the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, the 1996 Final Peace Agreement, and the 2008 Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) have failed to do. With strong efforts from both the GOP and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), an agreement to reach sustainable peace may have come to fruition. This section discusses the history that facilitated the negotiation process of the CAB.

Following the collapse of the 2008 MOA-AD, a return to the negotiating table and another attempt at sustainable peace surfaced in 2010.²⁹¹ Between these years, the MILF found themselves involved in an attack on Philippine forces traveling to Mindanao in search of improvised explosive device (IED) factory.²⁹² This 2009 ambush took the lives of “23 Marines ...and 21 guerillas.”²⁹³ The MILF’s harassment of the local population and conflict with the GOP continued until both sides eventually conceded to restarting negotiations.²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Noel Morada, “The Framework Agreement Between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF): Prospects for Peace and Implications for R2P,” Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, November 19, 2014, <http://www.r2pasiapacific.org/docs/R2P%20Ideas%20in%20Brief/The%20Frame%20Work%20Agreement%20Vol%202%20No%208%202012.pdf>.

²⁹² Patricio N. Abinales, “The Philippines in 2009: The Blustery Days of August,” *Asian Survey* 50, no. 1 (2010), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2010.50.1.218>.

²⁹³ Abinales, *The Philippines in 2009*, 222.

²⁹⁴ Morada, *The Framework Agreement*, 1.

Malaysia hosted the peace talks held between the MILF and the GOP with incumbent Philippine President Benigno Aquino III.²⁹⁵ In early 2011, the MILF submitted to the GOP a request to restore conditions of the unsigned 2008 agreement.²⁹⁶ The request was met with strong resistance from the Christian communities of Mindanao.²⁹⁷ Conflict between the Moros and Christians further delayed the peace process. Though the restoration of the MOA-AD did not occur, the GOP noted that achieving resolution with the MILF during Benigno Aquino III's presidency was quite possible. In an August 2011 meeting hosted by Japan, President Aquino and MILF leader Murad Ibrahim agreed on the expedition of peace negotiations between both groups.²⁹⁸ In 2003, Murad Ibrahim assumed MILF chairman duties following the death of MILF founder Hashim Salamat.²⁹⁹

During the fragile but standing ceasefire, the *Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP)-MILF Decision Points on Principles* was signed in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in April 2012.³⁰⁰ The conditions of this document established the “Bangsamoro as a secular political unit within the Philippines, located within its territory and subject to its sovereignty as a state.”³⁰¹ Subsequently in October 2012 at the Exploratory Talks on the Peace Process, both groups approved the initial conditions of an agreement that eventually became the CAB.³⁰² During the “32nd round” of the Malaysian hosted talks, the GOP and MILF discussed the “creation of a Bangsamoro entity to replace the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which is composed of five Muslim-dominated provinces on the huge island, which totals about 95,000 square kilometers.”³⁰³

²⁹⁵ Morada, *The Framework Agreement*, 1.

²⁹⁶ Renato Cruz De Castro, “The Philippines in 2012: Easygoing, Do-Nothing President Delivers,” *Asian Survey* 53, no. 1 (2013), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2013.53.1.109>.

²⁹⁷ De Castro, *The Philippines in 2012*, 113.

²⁹⁸ Reynaldo Santos, “Timeline: The Long Road to the Bangsamoro Region,” Rappler, March 27, 2014, <http://www.rappler.com/nation/48841-timeline-bangsamoro>.

²⁹⁹ Santos, *Timeline*.

³⁰⁰ De Castro, *The Philippines in 2012*, 113.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid., 309.

At the completion of the discussions, the GOP and MILF signed a timeline that mapped out stages towards a final peace agreement in Mindanao.³⁰⁴ This plan that would bring them to sustainable peace was called the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) and signed on October 15, 2012.³⁰⁵

A. NEGOTIATION OF PEACE AGREEMENT

The signing of the FAB in 2012 marked the first of many steps towards the creation of the peace agreement signed in 2014. The negotiations through March 2014 produced the annexes to the CAB that defined Mindanao's autonomy. Talks that centered on normalization, power sharing, and wealth sharing reopened in November 2012.³⁰⁶ Like many of the previous rounds, these talks and the subsequent one concluded with no solution to the conflict.³⁰⁷ This round was extremely difficult since discussions dealt with bargaining for how much autonomy would be given to the Moros.³⁰⁸ Talks also stalled due to a disagreement concerning the Bangsamoro Transition Authority and which entity would spearhead the operation.³⁰⁹ Talks eventually progressed as President Aquino closed the year out by signing an order that established a committee charged with the responsibility of developing the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

The peace negotiation process found more productivity in 2013. In the first six months of 2013, the GOP and MILF established responsibilities of the Third-Party Monitoring Group, announced the Transition Commission roster, signed the Annex on Transitional Arrangements and Modalities (TAM), and constructed guidelines for the creation of an Independent Commission on Policing (ICP).³¹⁰ The Third-Party Monitoring Team assumed responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the

³⁰⁴ Morada, *The Framework Agreement*, 1.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Santos, *Timeline*.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Rappler News, "Govt, MILF Resume Peace Talks," Rappler News, November 13, 2012, <http://www.rappler.com/nation/15972-gph-and-milf-resume-peace-talks>.

³⁰⁹ Santos, *Timeline*.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

finalized peace agreement. The Transition Commission assumed responsibility for the creation of a Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) that will govern the future Bangsamoro region. The Annex on Transitional Arrangements on Modalities (TAM) outlines the processes to be utilized as the ARMM transitions into its Bangsamoro identity.³¹¹ The annex further determined that the transition process will be spearheaded by the MILF.³¹² The Independent Commission on Policing (ICP) will report observations that will aid in the determination of the Bangsamoro Police's relationship with the Philippine National Police.³¹³ The conditions of the ICP also allow for a team tasked to assist with the creation of its task organization.³¹⁴ At the conclusion of the 35th through 37th rounds of peace talks, the GOP and MILF had made significant progress towards sustainable peace in Mindanao.

Peace talks remained turbulent and encountered numerous stalemates; however, the second half of 2013 continued to incrementally bring progress towards a sustainable peace between the GOP and the MILF. Although these rounds faced plenty of disagreements, both groups continued to push forward towards formulating a solution. In this time, the GOP and MILF conducted the 38th through 42nd rounds of negotiations and completed the wealth sharing and power sharing annexes.³¹⁵ The annex on wealth sharing signed in July 2013 will produce financial compensation and increase monetary shares from the region's mineral industry for the Moros.³¹⁶ Specifically, the Bangsamoro will collect 75% of all taxes collected from the region and 75% of all income from the metallic mineral industry.³¹⁷ The wealth-sharing annex increases financial opportunities

³¹¹ Angela Casauay, "GPH, MILF Sign Transition Annex," Rappler, February 28, 2013, <http://www.rappler.com/nation/special-coverage/peacetalks/22749-gph,-milf-sign-transition-annex>.

³¹² Casauay, *GPH, MILF Sign Transition*.

³¹³ Santos, *Timeline*.

³¹⁴ Casauay, *GPH, MILF Sign Transition*.

³¹⁵ Santos, *Timeline*.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, "Government of the Philippines and MILF Sign Key Agreement on Wealth Sharing, 13 July 2013," Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, last modified July 15, 2013, <http://www.hdcentre.org/en/resources/news/detail/article/1373892540-government-of-the-philippines-and-milf-sign-key-agreement-on-wealth-sharing-13-july-2013/>.

for the Moro population. The annex on power sharing was signed in December 2013.³¹⁸ This annex outlines the limit of power that the GOP and the Bangsamoro government will have within the future Bangsamoro region.³¹⁹

The arrival of 2014 brought what many thought would never come. The start of the year brought a solution to the Bangsamoro waters issue and the signing of the normalization annex.³²⁰ The normalization annex that was signed in January 2014 directs the retirement of the MILF's military unit and outlines the process of weapons withdrawal from the MILF and local militias in the future Bangsamoro political entity.³²¹ An addendum that was also completed announced the Bangsamoro region's water boundaries.³²² In February 2014, leaders from the Philippine Congress met with the Senate President and House Speaker and agreed to approve the BBL by the close of the year.³²³ Once the BBL finally receives approval from Congress, the CAB can begin its implementation process.³²⁴ On 27 March 2014, the GOP and the MILF signed the CAB.³²⁵ This historical signing may potentially close the door to 40 years of armed conflict and open the door to another chance at peace.³²⁶

³¹⁸ Santos, *Timeline*.

³¹⁹ Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, "Government of the Philippines and MILF Sign Key Annex on Powersharing as Part of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, 8 December 2013," Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, last modified December 9, 2013, <http://www.hdcentre.org/en/resources/news/detail/article/1386581778-government-of-the-philippines-and-milf-sign-key-annexe-on-powersharing-as-part-of-the-fra/>.

³²⁰ Santos, *Timeline*.

³²¹ GMA News Online, "GPH, MILF Panels Sign Final Annex To Bangsamoro Framework Agreement," *GMA News Online*, January 25, 2014, <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/345550/news/nation/gph-milf-panels-sign-final-annex-to-bangsamoro-framework-agreement>.

³²² GMA News Online, *GPH, MILF Sign Final Annex*.

³²³ Santos, *Timeline*.

³²⁴ Government of the Philippines, "Document: The Draft Bangsamoro Basic Law," Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, September 10, 2014, <http://www.gov.ph/2014/09/10/document-the-draft-bangsamoro-basic-law/>.

³²⁵ Nonviolent Peaceforce, "NP in the Philippines Statement on Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro Signing – March 2014," Nonviolent Peaceforce, last modified March 27, 2014, <http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/all-country-news/2014-06-26-17-22-53/74-np-in-the-philippines-statement-on-comprehensive-agreement-on-the-bangsamoro-signing-march-2014>.

³²⁶ Nonviolent Peaceforce, *NP in the Philippines Statement*.

B. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the CAB has been delayed. Before the agreement can be implemented, Congress must approve the BBL. The Special Ad Hoc Committee on the Bangsamoro created by the House of Representatives projected a 17 December 2014 approval for the BBL that legalizes the autonomous arrangements.³²⁷ The House of Representatives continues to unilaterally extend the deadline; the deadline is now on its second extension.³²⁸ The first extension to February 2015 has now been further delayed to March 2015.³²⁹ After Congress approves the BBL and has been signed by the president, a plebiscite within the proposed Bangsamoro political entity will be conducted.³³⁰ Following the plebiscite and the delineation of boundaries within the proposed Bangsamoro region, elections in 2016 for the incoming government are planned.

The Special Ad Hoc Committee on the Bangsamoro chair, Rufus Rodriguez, blamed delays with the BBL on issues like the disagreement against the Moros having its own police force not under the authority of the Philippine National Police Commission.³³¹ Additionally, he adds that the recent Mamasapano Massacre that killed 44 members of the Philippine National Police has assisted in delaying the timeline.³³² However, Rodriguez states that, once these changes are adjusted within the boundaries of the constitution, the BBL will be approved.³³³

³²⁷ Carolyn O. Arguillas, "Dec 17 is Target Date For Passing Bangsamoro Basic Law," *Minda News*, September 15, 2014, <http://www.mindanews.com/peace-process/2014/09/15/dec-17-is-target-date-for-passing-bangsamoro-basic-law/>.

³²⁸ Patricio P. Diaz, "Another Extension Puzzles," *Minda News*, December 18, 2014, <http://www.mindanews.com/mindaviews/2014/12/18/comment-another-extension-puzzles/>.

³²⁹ Diaz, *Another Extension*.

³³⁰ Office of the President of the Philippines, "Give Peace In Mindanao a Chance," Office of the President of the Philippines, December 01, 2014, <http://president.gov.ph/special/give-peace-in-mindanao-a-chance/>.

³³¹ Patricia Lourdes Viray, "House Panel to Finalize Draft Bangsamoro Law While on Recess," *The Philippine Star*, March 10, 2015, <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2015/03/10/1432087/house-panel-finalize-draft-bangsamoro-law-while-recess>.

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ *Ibid.*

C. THE CAB WILL NOT RESOLVE CONFLICT IN MINDANAO

Some remain pessimistic about the CAB's potential to achieve sustainable peace. As there are many reasons why the CAB will succeed, there are equally as many reasons why the CAB will fail. Reasons why some believe that the CAB will fail include: the exclusivity of the agreement and the inability to completely implement conditions of the agreement.

Rita Linda V. Jimeno discusses the existence of an opinion by some that the CAB is destined to fail due to its exclusivity.³³⁴ The recently signed CAB was an agreement solely between the GOP and the MILF. Jimeno explains that the consensus believes that the CAB will fail since it does not include groups like the Lumads, the MNLF, and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). Furthermore, the exclusivity of the agreement would likely increase conflict in Mindanao. Prior to the signing of the CAB, 2013 brought incidents of violence in the region by smaller armed groups like MNLF-Misuari Group (MNLF-MG) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (BIFM).³³⁵ These groups are residents of the proposed Bangsamoro entity. The violent episodes that these groups were a part of clearly show that armed conflict still existed despite ongoing negotiations between the GOP and the MILF.³³⁶ Specifically, the BIFM disapproved of the peace negotiations and communicated their rejection of the peace agreement to the GOP through armed conflict.³³⁷ These incidents leave us to question whether the CAB is truly inclusive of all groups living in Mindanao. Exclusivity of an agreement has been a past point of failure in some of the previous peace agreements that have collapsed. While both signatories to the latest agreement have claimed that the CAB is inclusive of all groups living in Mindanao, the fact that the agreement was signed between only two parties may play a role in disturbing the potential for success of the agreement.

³³⁴ Rita Linda V. Jimeno, "The Promise of Bangsamoro," *Manila Standard Today*, April 7, 2014, <http://manilastandardtoday.com/2014/04/07/the-promise-of-bangsamoro/>.

³³⁵ Joseph Franco, "Violence and Peace Spoilers in the Southern Philippines," Middle East Institute, July 15, 2014, <http://www.mei.edu/content/map/violence-and-peace-spoilers-southern-philippines>.

³³⁶ Franco, *Violence and Peace Spoilers*.

³³⁷ Lotta Themner and Peter Wallensteen, "Armed Conflicts, 1946–2012," *Journal of Peace Research* 50, no. 509 (2013), <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/50/4/509>.

The GOP and the MILF's inability to completely implement the CAB is another concern. Gus Miclat believes that "implementation of its provisions is the major hurdle."³³⁸ Miclat hopes that those responsible for drafting the BBL truly capture the conditions that were developed between the GOP and the MILF.³³⁹ National Secretary of the United Youth for Peace and Development-Relief Assistance Network and Organization (UNYPAD-RANAO) Nasser Binasing provides that there are MILF leaders who are growing agitated in response to rumors that the GOP has been manipulating the basic law.³⁴⁰ Additionally, violent incidents involving other armed groups in Mindanao during the peace process showed that the GOP's "strategy in the southern Philippines is focused on an agreement with the MILF" and "revealed the dangers of Manila's failure to recognize and reward powerful local intermediaries in the Sulu Archipelago, including Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) Chairman Nur Misuari and Sakur Tan, the powerful governor of Sulu province."³⁴¹ Though it is still early to determine the BBL's impact, the concern about whether the BBL will truly benefit the entire Bangsamoro region and not just the MILF still remains.³⁴² If the CAB is not completely implemented as discussed at the signing, the probability of armed conflict in the region is more likely.

Another potential obstacle to the implementation of the CAB is the plebiscite scheduled after the passing of the BBL. Following the BBL's approval, "people living in areas to be included in the Bangsamoro will need to ratify the Bangsamoro Basic Law in a plebiscite to be held in 2015."³⁴³ In past agreements, plebiscites conducted during past negotiations tend to weaken some of the conditions that were originally agreed upon. The

³³⁸ Gus Miclat, "Hopes and Challenges of the Bangsamoro: Towards Broadening A Peace Constituency," Initiatives For International Dialogue, April 3, 2014, <http://www.iidnet.org/hopes-and-challenges-of-the-bangsamoro-towards-broadening-a-peace-constituency/>.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Nousha Mahtab, "UNYPAD Ranao Region Holds Forum on Human Resource Mapping," Bangsamoro Professionals, December 8, 2014, <http://bangsamoroprofessionals.org/8-events/13-unypad-ranao>.

³⁴¹ John T. Sidel, "The Philippines in 2013: Disappointment, Disgrace, Disaster," *Asian Survey* 54, no. 1 (2014), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2014.54.1.64>.

³⁴² Miclat, *Hopes and Challenges*.

³⁴³ Agence France-Presse, "Key Points of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro," *Interaksyon*, March 27, 2014, <http://www.interaksyon.com/article/83610/key-points-of-the-comprehensive-agreement-on-the-bangsamoro>.

deviation from the original conditions typically angers one group and results in the re-ignition of armed conflict. While some believe that the passing and implementation of the BBL is key to the agreement's success, there are others who believe that there are other factors that would determine the CAB's success. In a discussion on the CAB by Butch D. Enerio and Mario C. Manlupig, Jr., Mary Ann Arnado of the Mindanao People's Caucus provides that the true test of the CAB will be during the plebiscite.³⁴⁴ This should be a major concern because if the plebiscite significantly alters the conditions that were originally agreed on, the agreement could face difficulties in getting completely implemented. This has been the case historically. The plebiscite is tentatively scheduled for some time in 2015; regardless of its results, both sides may benefit by remaining diligent in the agreements implementation.

D. THE CAB WILL RESOLVE CONFLICT IN MINDANAO

Despite those that believe the CAB is a failure in the making, there are those who perceive that the CAB will finally bring sustainable peace to Mindanao. Some predict that the CAB will be a success due to the inclusiveness of the agreement. Historically, the exclusiveness of past agreements has played a major factor in their collapse. Edwin Lacierda, a presidential spokesman from Malacanang Palace, claims that all residents of the future Bangsamoro entity will benefit from the agreement.³⁴⁵ Lacierda's statement suggests that the agreement between the GOP and MILF will represent the best interests of all and is inclusive of all groups such as the indigenous Lumads, Christians, MILF, and MNLF.³⁴⁶ Lacierda further states that this agreement is an upgrade of the current agreement that governs the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and asks

³⁴⁴ Butch D. Enerio and Mario C. Manlupig, Jr., "Bangsamoro Basic Law 'Not An Answer,'" *Sun Star*, June 5, 2014, <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/cagayan-de-oro/local-news/2014/06/05/bangsamoro-basic-law-not-answer-346566>.

³⁴⁵ Asian Journal, "Filipinos Should Read Bangsamoro Peace Pact, Says Malacanang," Asian Journal, July 30, 2013, <http://asianjournal.com/news/filipinos-should-read-bangsamoro-peace-pact-says-malacanang/>.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

for other groups to review the agreement for proof of its inclusivity.³⁴⁷ Iqbal, the MILF's peace panel chair is in concurrence with Lacierda's claim. Iqbal believes in the CAB and states that the agreement is not a solution for just the MILF, but a solution for all residents of the proposed Bangsamoro region regardless of affiliation.³⁴⁸ Evidence that the peace agreement might find success and a hint of inclusivity took form in a message from the MNLF. The MNLF, who originally believed that the CAB was a violation of their 1996 peace agreement, sent Reverend Absalom Cerveza to extend a congratulations to the GOP and MILF on behalf of Nur Misuari after the agreement's signing.³⁴⁹

This agreement also differs from previous agreements due to its inclusion of the international community. Though the future can never be easily predicted, Professor Mohagher Iqbal provides, from his perspective as the MILF's chief negotiator, that the positive points of the agreement outweigh the negative and that the global community can greatly assist in ensuring success of the agreement.³⁵⁰ Like Iqbal, Selcuk Colakoglu awards the international community with the credit of the agreement's success due to their "constructive assistance and participation" during the peace talks.³⁵¹ Iqbal states that the outcome for success is bright and highly probable due to the actions shown during negotiations by the government of the Philippines.³⁵² Iqbal concludes that the agreement is close to resolution due to the lessons learned from past agreement attempts.³⁵³ Based on Colakoglu and Iqbal's assessment, the autonomous conditions

³⁴⁷ Asia News Monitor, "Malacanang Appeals To All To Take a Look at the Bangsamoro Framework Agreement, Says Peace Accord Will Benefit All Bangsamoro," *Asia News Monitor*, July 31, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu/docview/1415376389/9B297972265F4DFBPQ/1?accountid=12702>.

³⁴⁸ Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, "GPH, MILF Chief Negotiators Recount Road To Bangsamoro Peace Pact," Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, June 09, 2014, <http://www.opapp.gov.ph/milf/news/gph-milf-chief-negotiators-recount-road-bangsamoro-peace-pact>.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Mohagher Iqbal, "Prospects and Obstacles of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro," Asia Peacebuilding Initiatives, July 23, 2014, <http://peacebuilding.asia/prospects-and-obstacles-of-the-framework-agreement-on-the-bangsamoro/>.

³⁵¹ Colakoglu, *Can the Mindanao Peace Process End*.

³⁵² Iqbal, *Prospects and Obstacles*.

³⁵³ Ibid.

crafted in conjunction with GOP backing and international support will secure sustainable peace.

Though the implementation process has been delayed, observers like Jules Maaten argue that the agreement will be completely implemented. Project Director of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Jules Maaten, states that the CAB is promising in its quest for resolution due to conditions that include the implementation of a Moro basic law.³⁵⁴ Both sides must ensure that the CAB is completely implemented in order to guarantee the best chances for peace in the region.

E. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, success or failure of the CAB depends on Congress passing the BBL. Some people believe that the exclusivity of the agreement and the likelihood that the GOP and MILF will not completely implement the agreement will be the major reasons that contribute to the failure of the agreement. On the other hand, others believe that the agreement is inclusive and that (because it addresses all issues) it will promote an environment that ensures all conditions are completely implemented. While the future is still unclear and the country prepares for a new president in 2016, the CAB is indeed promising in its potential to reach sustainable peace.

³⁵⁴ Friedrich Naumann Regional Office for Southeast and East Asia, "Friedrich Naumann Foundation," accessed July 23, 2014, <http://www.fnfasia.org/the-bangsamoro-peace-agreement-a-historic-breakthrough/>.

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VI. CONCLUSION

The 2014 signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) is the latest effort between the Government of the Philippines (GOP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to resolve the long and drawn out conflict in Mindanao. Studies of past agreements that collapsed suggest that an inability to fully implement conditions of those agreements and the exclusion of important groups from the negotiations leading up to those agreements, have been the main reasons why previous attempts have failed. Using the themes of implementation and exclusivity, this section briefly discusses the similarities and differences between the CAB and previous agreements, makes a final conclusion on the CAB's likelihood of resolving conflict, and addresses future factors that could potentially steer Mindanao toward instability.

A. 1976 TRIPOLI AGREEMENT

Incomplete implementation of the agreement by the GOP was responsible for the failure of the Tripoli Agreement. Exclusivity was not an issue with this agreement, since it involved all major Moro actors at the time. President Ferdinand Marcos' deviation from the original agreement was evidence that the GOP did not want to resolve conflict.³⁵⁵ Rather than moving forward with the conditions discussed, the GOP implemented a surprise plebiscite referendum that turned one autonomous region into two separate autonomous regions.³⁵⁶ Due to disagreement on the interpretation of the agreement and GOP's inability to fully implement the conditions originally agreed upon, the agreement collapsed.

³⁵⁵ Majul, *The Moro Struggle*, 909.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 908.

B. 1996 FINAL PEACE AGREEMENT

This study attributes the collapse of the Final Peace Agreement to the following two reasons: the Moro National Liberation Front's (MNLF) inability to fully implement the agreement and the exclusivity of the agreement. Corruption by MNLF members holding top government positions in Mindanao prevented the agreement from being fully implemented.³⁵⁷ Additionally, exclusion of groups like the MILF generated disgruntled parties in the region.³⁵⁸ The failure to include these groups into the negotiation process left unresolved land issues between the Christians and Moros and halted the progress of stability in the region.³⁵⁹ Due to these reasons, the Final Peace Agreement collapsed.

C. 2008 MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT ON ANCESTRAL DOMAIN

This study points to the exclusivity of the agreement as the main reason for the collapse of the 2008 Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD). The exclusivity of the agreement resulted in protests from marginalized groups.³⁶⁰ Christian politicians eventually submitted a petition to the Supreme Court that would declare the agreement unconstitutional.³⁶¹ Failure to include such groups ultimately led to the downfall of the MOA-AD.

D. 2014 COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT ON THE BANGSAMORO

President Benigno Aquino III and his administration have made tremendous efforts to restore peace in the Mindanao. The GOP's desire to fully implement the agreement has been evident throughout the process. However, after the signing of the CAB in March 2014, the first deadline to pass the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) by December 17, 2014 was missed.³⁶² The deadline to approve the BBL was subsequently

³⁵⁷ May, *Obstacles to Conflict Resolution*, 284–285.

³⁵⁸ De Castro, *Weakness and Gambits*, 703.

³⁵⁹ Bertrand, *Peace and Conflict*, 51.

³⁶⁰ Hurights Osaka, *Mindanao Conflict*.

³⁶¹ Lum, *The Republic of the Philippines*, 20.

³⁶² Arguillas, *Dec 17 is Target Date*.

changed to March 2015 by the House of Representatives.³⁶³ While the missed milestone is a different circumstance than the ones responsible for the collapse of the Tripoli Agreement, it could still potentially trigger a pattern of future missed deadlines that might instigate conflict in the region.

The MILF and the GOP have been deeply invested into the process of finding a solution to the conflict in Mindanao. Though the GOP and the MILF are the only signing parties, the GOP claims that the agreement is inclusive of all residents living in Mindanao.³⁶⁴ The MNLF has been on record congratulating both parties on the signing of the CAB.³⁶⁵ Based on this information and relevant studies, the CAB appears to have addressed points of failure that contributed to the collapse of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement. Currently, the GOP and MILF awaits for Congress to approve the BBL. The exclusion of Congress from the negotiation process has resulted in significant delays. If Congress continues to extend the BBL deadline, then the potential for the MILF to return to violence may be likely. A return to violence by the MILF will likely hurt the chances of the CAB being implemented; however, if Congress meets the BBL deadline then it is probable that the CAB will resolve conflict in Mindanao.

The current agreement fully addresses the main reason that led to the failure of the 2008 MOA-AD. The GOP has been adamant about the inclusivity of the CAB.³⁶⁶ The MILF also concurs about the CAB's inclusivity.³⁶⁷ If the agreement is truly inclusive, then the chance for the re-emergence of violence from other non-signing parties may be unlikely. Though the incumbent administration have been very supportive during the process, the 2014 CAB will still be subjected to a plebiscite referendum in Mindanao.³⁶⁸ The process of removing the requirement for a plebiscite referendum is unlikely since it will require extensive legislation to do so. As previously stated, results from past

³⁶³ Patricio P. Diaz, "Another Extension Puzzles," *Mindanews*, December 18, 2014, <http://www.mindanews.com/mindaviews/2014/12/18/comment-another-extension-puzzles/>.

³⁶⁴ Asian Journal, *Filipinos Should Read*.

³⁶⁵ Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, *GPH MILF Negotiators*.

³⁶⁶ Asian Journal, *Filipinos Should Read*.

³⁶⁷ Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, *GPH MILF Chief Negotiators*.

³⁶⁸ Office of the President of the Philippines, *Give Peace*.

plebiscite referendums have led to the collapse of previous peace agreements. If the forthcoming plebiscite referendum produces results inconsistent with the original conditions settled upon during the signing, there is a likelihood that violence in the region will continue. If the results parallel the original conditions, then the chance that the CAB will resolve conflict in Mindanao is highly probable.

E. LIKELIHOOD OF THE CAB RESOLVING CONFLICT

This study has determined that the two leading reasons for the failure of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, 1996 Final Peace Agreement, and the 2008 MOA-AD are the exclusion of one or more important groups from the negotiations and one group's failure to fully implement the conditions of the agreement. But in the last few years, both the GOP and the MILF have been working hard to create sustainable peace in Mindanao.

Though both signatory groups' claim that the CAB is inclusive and will be fully implemented, the fact remains that a plebiscite referendum is scheduled to be conducted. Though results and effects from past plebiscite referendums have been historically disappointing, this is not a determinant of what results will be produced from the forthcoming plebiscite referendum. Additionally, the deadline for the passage of the BBL has already been extended. The GOP and MILF may remain positive during the implementation phase as they were during the CAB's drafting. Should both groups do so, the conflict may be resolved. To this point, the CAB shows plenty of promise. If the agreement is truly inclusive as both parties claim, then we can expect key grievances to eventually be addressed and resolved. If this pattern of movement continues, then a minor deviation from the implementation timeline should have little to no effect. Based on these reasons, this study predicts that the CAB will resolve conflict in Mindanao.

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